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# Understanding Workplace Incivility Experiences and the Moderating Role of Mindfulness

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Graduate Program in Psychology  
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## Abstract

Rude treatment at work can lead to many negative consequences, as evidenced by the wealth of research available. This dissertation, addressed two important questions that have yet to receive adequate attention. First, how does an employee experience incivility, and second, what is a practical and cost-effective way of mitigating the negative outcomes associated with incivility and promoting positive ones? Incivility research has mainly employed quantitative methods to understand incivility experiences. Using qualitative methods however, would complement the knowledge and potentially move the field of inquiry in new directions. As such, the goal of Study One was to obtain a narrative description of workplace incivility experiences. I took a descriptive phenomenological approach as this allowed me to best capture the events through the employees' eyes. The interviews involved discussions about an uncivil event and their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour during and after the event. Interview findings revealed several novel elements of the incivility incident such as the importance of communication and the almost certain deterioration of the relationship between perpetrator and victim. The interview findings also identified vulnerability factors that intensified the negative experience. For example, newcomers to the organization were more likely to experience feelings of anger, hate, and anxiety than more tenured employees. In Study Two, I explored the role of three mindfulness facets (non-reactivity, non-judging, and acting with awareness) as regulatory factors by examining whether they mitigated the negative relationship between incivility and well-being and promoted forgiveness via decreased rumination and negative affect. Overall, results showed that when using the Perceived Victimization Measure, non-judging and acting with awareness buffered against stress and promoted forgiveness via decreased negative affect, but not

rumination. These results were not replicated when using the Workplace Incivility Scale.

Theoretical and practical implications are discussed, along with directions for future research.

*Keywords*

Workplace incivility, qualitative research, stress, forgiveness, reflective measurement, mindfulness, moderated mediation

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## **CHAPTER ONE: Literature Review**

### **Understanding Workplace Experiences and the Moderating Role of Mindfulness**

In the last two decades, workplace incivility has become a hot topic. This is evidenced by the increasing number of scholarly articles, books and book chapters, and counselling services offered on workplace incivility. Workplace incivility is defined as a form of interpersonal mistreatment consisting of three characteristics: violation of workplace norms and respect, ambiguous intent to harm, and low intensity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Talking down to others, not listening when somebody is talking to you, and ignoring someone are all examples of workplace incivility.

Workplace norms and respect refers to an organization's shared understanding of what is considered acceptable interactional conduct among employees. Acts of incivility violate and undermine that understanding and can disrupt the well-being of employees and the effective functioning of the organization (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008). The second distinguishing feature of workplace incivility is its ambiguous intent to harm. The instigator might be purposeful in his or her behaviour with the intent to harm the target, but workplace incivility might also be due to ignorance or oversight on the part of the instigator, or even just a misinterpretation of the intent of the action on the part of the target (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Compared to workplace violence or bullying, workplace incivility is described as low intensity, and although it may be less severe in nature and may appear more inconsequential than other mistreatment constructs (i.e., sexual harassment, aggression, abusive supervision), targets of workplace incivility still suffer negative organizational and individual outcomes (e.g., Lim & Lee, 2011). Workplace incivility can also encourage more severe forms

of mistreatment that may result in a spiraling effect of negative behaviours (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2005; Lim et al., 2008).

Researchers have accumulated a wealth of knowledge regarding the nomological network of workplace incivility. Two important questions that have yet to receive adequate research attention however are: *how* does an employee experience incivility (i.e., how does he/she perceive the interaction, describe it, feel about it, talk about it with others) and what is a practical and cost-effective way of mitigating the negative outcomes associated with incivility? The goals of this dissertation were to examine these questions in two separate studies. First, I interviewed employees to obtain a first-hand account of their workplace incivility experiences. By directly involving employees and giving them voice through interviews, I was able to gain direct introspective access to these higher-order cognitive processes (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). And secondly, I explored if mindfulness, defined as being aware of the present moment and acknowledging and accepting one's feelings and thoughts, can act as a buffer between incivility and negative outcomes or promote more positive reactions and behaviour. If mindfulness mitigates the negative effects of workplace incivility and promotes more positive responses, increasing mindfulness can potentially offer organizations and human-resource managers a practical and effective tool for helping employees deal with incivility. Before presenting my studies, I first present a comprehensive review of the workplace incivility literature. As I review the literature, I highlight how my two studies serve to further add to the incivility literature.

### **Prevalence of Workplace Incivility**

Research into the phenomenon of workplace incivility is wide-reaching. In a recent qualitative review, Schilpzand, de Pater, and Erez (2014) explored the body of research produced thus far and found that workplace incivility is a universal phenomenon that occurs in different

cultures and different industries. Whereas most studies have looked at incivility in the context of American samples, other studies have looked at incivility in samples from Australia (Martin & Hine, 2005; Kirk, Schutte, & Hine, 2011), New Zealand (Griffin, 2010), Canada (Leiter, Laschinger, Day, & Oore, 2011; Van Jaarsveld, Walker, & Skarlicki, 2010), China (Chen, Ferris, Kwan, Yan, Zhou, & Hong, 2013; Wu, Zhang, Chiu, & He, 2013), Korea (Kim & Shaprio, 2008), Singapore (Lim & Lee, 2011; Lim & Teo, 2009), the Philippines (Scott, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2013), and the UK (Totterdell, Herscovis, & Niven, 2012). This suggests that incivility is not an occurrence limited to one culture, but it is experienced universally.

Similarly, the incidence and impact of workplace incivility has been assessed across a number of different occupations and professions. Results from studies conducted with federal court employees (Cortina et al. 2001; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004), bank tellers (Sliter, Jex, Wolford, & McInnerney, 2010), manufacturing employees (Wu et al., 2013), call-center employees (Scott et al., 2013), university employees (Cortina & Magley, 2009; Sakurai & Jex, 2012), retail employees (Kern & Grandey, 2009), healthcare workers (Leiter et al., 2011) and members of the US military (Cortina et al., 2001) have shown that workplace incivility exists in and affects many industries and their employees (Schilpzand et al., 2014).

### **Incivility and Other Mistreatment Constructs**

A common criticism in the incivility literature is that the construct is not truly different from the various other mistreatment constructs available. Numerous other researchers have commented on, and investigated, the effects of workplace mistreatment (i.e., Neuman & Baron, 2005; Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Tepper, 2000). Each of these researchers has contributed to the field of workplace mistreatment by developing their own unique construct (i.e., aggression, bullying, and abusive supervision, respectively). The proliferation of mistreatment constructs has

focused on differentiation and fragmentation even though the conceptualizations, antecedents and consequences of the various mistreatment constructs are noticeably very similar.

Raver and Barling (2008) as well as Aquino and Thau (2009) devoted chapters to illustrating that many of the field's constructs key features are almost identical. Similarly, Hershcovis (2011) provided qualitative and meta-analytic evidence to show the similarities of mistreatment constructs. More than that, two recent meta-analyses showed that a number of personal and situational factors predict workplace mistreatment and that workplace mistreatment is related to a host of negative outcomes for both, the employee and the organization (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Hershcovis et al., 2007).

These meta-analyses not only combined multiple forms of mistreatment in their article searches, but also combined the correlational relationships among the mistreatment variables and their consequences. Interestingly, Bowling and Beehr (2006) stated that mistreatment research “appears under many different labels...but each label refers to the same overall construct” (p. 998). This would suggest knowledge of one form of mistreatment can inform another. Future research will be needed to disentangle, if possible, the various forms of workplace mistreatment and provide consistent and strong evidence of discriminant validity. This warrants future research however, the present study was focused on incivility, and as such this debate is beyond the scope of the current research.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Several theoretical frameworks have been used to study workplace incivility. The lack of a solid unifying theoretical foundation, however, has made it difficult for scholars and practitioners to understand, integrate, and incorporate the broad and sometimes varied findings on workplace incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2014). This section presents an account of several

theoretical frameworks that have guided incivility research. I present these theories not only to show the lack of a unifying theory of workplace incivility, but also to highlight the complexity of this phenomenon. The interactions between individual cognitions, behaviours, and affect, as well as the environment might make it too difficult to study all these phenomena under one theoretical lens or using a singular method. Given the complexity of these interactions, greater insight might be gained by studying workplace incivility using a variety of methodologies.

**Social interactionist approach.** In their seminal article, Andersson and Pearson (1999) adopted a social interactionist approach. According to this approach, the instigator(s), target(s), observer(s), and the social context all contribute to, and affect, an incivility encounter. In particular, the targets' reactions to the encounters and their subsequent behaviour are dependent upon the potentially dynamic perceptions of the instigator, environment, and incivility event itself. Unique to this approach is the conceptualization of incivility as a process, rather than a discrete event or single act in time. A social interactionist approach does not focus on the motive behind an individual's action (i.e., whether it was good or bad, intentional or not); this approach is more focused on the personal and situational factors involved in an incivility exchange and in understanding how these factors contribute to the process and perception of incivility.

Incivility is theorized to be the tipping point for retaliation and more aggressive and harmful workplace behaviour in what is known as the incivility spiral. The incivility spiral is postulated to start when an individual experiences a violation of norms for mutual respect. Being treated impolitely or inconsiderately leads to perceptions of interpersonal mistreatment and interactional injustice (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). These violations elicit negative emotions in the victim making it likely that he or she too will disregard norms for mutual respect and wish to reciprocate or "get even" by further inconsiderate acts. It is this tit-for-tat behaviour that makes



up the incivility spiral. Unfortunately, researchers have not adequately adopted the social interactionist approach proposed by Andersson and Pearson. Research has not studied the *process* of incivility, but has instead looked at outcomes and/or antecedents of workplace incivility from the perspective of those who experienced incivility, witnessed it, or instigated it. Neither have researchers developed or proposed other theories that highlight the interconnectedness between witnessing, experiencing, and instigating incivility, nor have they examined the affective, behavioural, and cognitive processes accompanying these experiences and events. As will become apparent in this review, current dominant methodologies in incivility research (i.e., using frequency-based measures) might alone be unable to bring this process-based view of incivility to light. One method that could help advance our knowledge is to highly involve participants in the research and allow them to provide, in their own voice, their perceptions and descriptions of the experience.

**Socio-cognitive transactional model.** The effects of workplace incivility range from work outcomes to work attitudes to non-work outcomes. One of the most visible effects of incivility is stress. The socio-cognitive transactional model of stress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) posits that stress is located in the relationship between the environment, individuals' appraisal of the environment, and the ongoing attempts to cope with issues that arise between the interaction of the two (Griffin & Clarke, 2011). According to this theory, there are two stages of cognitive appraisal: the primary appraisal and the secondary appraisal and each of these stages can be affected by factors such as personality, self-esteem, and mood.

The primary appraisal involves assessing whether or not potential stressors are threatening and the secondary appraisal involves evaluating the coping resources and responses

an individual can use to deal with the stress. An individual experiences anxiety or distress when he or she appraises a situation as stressful but does not have the ability to cope with it. The appraisal process is central to incivility research because “how a person construes an event shapes the emotional and behavioural response” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 24) and given incivility’s ambiguous intent to harm, the role individuals’ perception of the experience has in their reaction and interpretation of the event is crucial. Researchers (e.g., Cortina et al., 2001; Cortina & Magley, 2009; Lim & Tai, 2014) have so far used the transactional model of stress to understand how individuals appraise and cope with incivility and the outcomes individuals experience as a result of an incivility incident. While the transactional model of stress could be used to highlight the interconnectedness between witnessing, experiencing, and instigating incivility, researchers have yet to do so (Schilpzand, 2014).

**Conservation of resources theory.** Another theory that focuses on stress in our understanding of workplace incivility is Hobfoll’s (1989) conservation of resources theory (COR). This theory is primarily rooted in the pleasure principle, which notes that humans instinctually seek what is pleasurable, and in Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory, which postulates that people actively engage in their environment to increase opportunities for positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement mandates that individuals must strive to build and maintain personal characteristics (e.g., self-esteem, mastery, status, position) and social circumstances (organizational tenure, intimacy), which will make the receipt of reinforcement more probable and loss of such characteristics and circumstances less probable (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982).

According to COR, stress is a reaction to experiencing or perceiving a loss of valued or instrumental resources. Resources are important because they have instrumental and symbolic

value in that they help people define who they are (Brown & Andrews, 1986, as cited in Hobfoll, 1989). Environmental circumstances can threaten or deplete an individual's resources. Applying this model to workplace incivility suggests that experiencing or witnessing incivility is an actual or perceived threat to an individual. Such behaviour might cause an individual to perceive a loss of a valued resource such as self-worth, social belonging, or positive workplace relationships, which then induce feelings of stress.

**Affective events theory.** Affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) has also guided and informed incivility research. In broad terms, Weiss and Cropanzano posited that understanding events that happen in the workplace requires understanding individuals' affective reactions. Any event that happens in the workplace evokes affective reactions that will result in certain attitudes and behaviours. Applying this reasoning to incivility would suggest that an uncivil incident may elicit negative emotions in the target (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Uncivil behaviour from a supervisor or co-worker elicits feelings of distress, embarrassment, and even humiliation. These feelings contribute to a negative evaluation of one's work (Lim et al., 2008), and in extreme cases, the negative affect might then motivate targets to "engage in affect-driven behaviour" (Ghosh, Dierkes, & Falletta, 2011, p. 23). This could be in the form of retaliating with more incivility or more aggressive forms of behaviour, possibly as a way to prevent against future attacks.

**Dysempowerment theory.** Another theory that uses affective responses as a precursor to attitudes and behaviour is Kane and Montgomery's (1998) dysempowerment theory. When an individual perceives a work event as an affront to their dignity or a violation of basic norms of respect and consideration, they experience negative affective responses which develop into

attitudes and behaviours that have the potential to disrupt his or her well-being and other outcomes.

In sum, workplace incivility is best understood through appraisals of stress and negative affect. Incivility is a negative experience that generally elicits stress as individuals may perceive the behaviour to be a threat to valued resources. It too evokes negative behaviour, which can lead to potentially maladaptive attitudes and behaviour. Workplace incivility research has used these various theoretical perspectives to guide empirical investigations and interpretation of findings. Below, I provide a review of the empirical literature.

### **Review of the Empirical Literature**

Workplace incivility mainly falls under three main research streams. The first and largest stream focuses on the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes of workplace incivility. The second stream of research explores variables that can predict workplace incivility. The third stream is the investigation of causal pathways and boundary conditions of workplace incivility. As well, I subsequently describe the literature focused on the measurement of incivility, and then I will go on to review the empirical literature in each of the three substantive research streams.

**Measuring workplace incivility.** Like the various theoretical perspectives used to understand workplace incivility, the measurement of workplace incivility has too been varied. Below I present a brief overview of the incivility measurement tools and methods.

Most studies measure workplace incivility using the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS) developed by Cortina et al. (2001). The WIS is a seven-item scale that asks participants the frequency with which they have experienced certain uncivil behaviour from supervisors or co-workers during the past five years. Two sample items are “made jokes at your expense” and “paid little attention to a statement you made.” Recently, Cortina and colleagues (Cortina, Kabat-

Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013) added five more items to the WIS to assess the construct domain more fully. Examples of the new items involve asking respondents about the frequency with which employees have been interrupted, been targeted with angry outbursts, or received hostile looks from supervisors or co-workers. Some studies have modified the WIS to fit their research needs. This includes changes to the reference period (Laschinger, Wong, Regan, Young-Ritchie, & Bushell, 2013), asking about a specific source of incivility (Sakurai & Jex, 2012), changing the perspective from experienced incivility to either witnessing or instigating incivility (Reich & Hershcovis, 2015; Blau & Anderson, 2005), or adapting the stem to apply to a workgroup or cyber context (Miner-Rubino & Reed, 2010; Lim & Teo, 2009).

Even though the WIS is the most predominant instrument used to measure workplace incivility, other measures have been developed. The Uncivil Workplace Behaviour Questionnaire was developed and validated by Martin and Hine (2005). This 20-item scale assesses the frequency with which employees have experienced behaviours such as eye-rolling, raised voices, being gossiped about, being excluded, or being interrupted at work during the past year. Unlike the WIS, the Uncivil Workplace Behaviour Questionnaire does not specify the source of incivility. Another measure is the Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale (Spector & Jex, 1998); it focuses on the frequency of interpersonal conflict that an employee experiences at work, which might not really capture the definition and conceptualization of workplace incivility. Due to the diversity of instrumentation available to assess workplace incivility, Schilpzand et al. (2014) have noted the difficulty in providing a quantitative summary of the incivility research. Another potential shortcoming of the above measurement approach is their formative nature as described by Hershcovis and Reich (2013).

***Workplace Incivility Scale and the Perceived Victimization Measure.*** Measures like the WIS and the ones described above are *conceptually* formative in nature as described by Hershcovis and Reich (2013). This approach has recently received some criticism (e.g., Hershcovis & Reich, 2013). Formative measures assume that each item, although correlated, is independent and that the items are the casual indicators that form the composite variable (Edwards, 2011). In other words, causality flows from the indicator (i.e., the item) to the construct and suggests that each item adds meaning to the construct but that it is not interchangeable with the other (Edwards & Bagozzi, 2000; Hershcovis & Reich, 2013). Accordingly, to accurately and completely measure a construct, one would have to measure each and every possible behaviour. In the case of workplace incivility, this would mean that if I measured whether an individual experienced being put down but did not assess if he or she also experienced being ignored or excluded, I would not be assessing the full construct breadth (Tarraf, Hershcovis, & Bowling, 2017). Thus, one of the major drawbacks of using the WIS is that it is not always possible to measure every behaviour. Another drawback is that common analysis techniques may not be appropriate when using formative measures as most analyses assume endogenous indicators (Lee & Cadogan, 2013; Rigdon, 2013).

In contrast, reflective measures posit that that construct (or latent variable) is the common cause of an item. This means that items are interchangeable and removing one item would not change the overall meaning of the measure (Edwards, 2011; Podsakoff et al., 2006). Reflective measures are seen as advantageous in that, unlike formative measures, failing to measure one item would not change the way the final score is interpreted. Additionally, investigating models using reflective measures is more methodologically sound as the variables themselves are endogenous. A third advantage is that reflective measures can make it easier to understand the

content and severity of mistreatment scales (Hershcovis & Reich, 2013). Specifically, although an individual might agree that he or she had been ignored, he or she might not perceive that as uncivil. Nonetheless, formative measures often presume that each type of behaviour is interpreted equally. When using a reflective measure, researchers can forgo asking about specific behaviour they believe constitutes workplace incivility and instead ask if they have been treated rudely or uncivilly.

To this end, Sasso (2013) developed a reflective measure, the Perceived Victimization Measure (PVM) that can be applied to different forms of mistreatment. Rather than only assessing incivility, the PVM assess mistreatment more broadly. It is more about the individual's perception of experiencing aggression. After completing a mistreatment scale, participants are asked to reflect upon their responses to that scale to complete the PVM (e.g., "I was intentionally subjected to a hurtful experience"). In this way, researchers are not just asking about how frequently behaviours have been experienced, but are also understanding how individuals have interpreted the behaviours as uncivil or not and how they have attributed the intentionality of the perpetrator's behaviour. Currently, there are no other reflective measures of mistreatment.

Thus, in addition to investigating workplace incivility using the WIS, I included perceived victimization as a second measure of incivility. This allowed me to better differentiate between individuals who feel they were the target of rude behaviours and those that were not, and can perhaps provide a more accurate representation of workplace incivility.

**Outcomes of workplace incivility.** The first study to empirically investigate the outcomes of workplace incivility was conducted by Cortina et al. (2001). Using a large sample of public sector employees, Cortina et al. found that workplace incivility was related to lower job satisfaction, higher turnover intentions, and greater psychological distress. In another study

investigating the impact of workplace incivility on occupational outcomes, Lim et al. (2008) found that workplace incivility was related to lower job satisfaction. Satisfaction with one's supervisor and co-worker, however, was more strongly related to workplace incivility than work satisfaction. Lim et al. further documented strong relations between workplace incivility and high turnover intention and poor mental health.

Researchers have examined more specific forms of workplace incivility like cyber incivility. Cyber incivility is “communicative behaviour exhibited in computer-mediated interactions that violate workplace norms of mutual respect” (Lim & Teo, 2009, p. 419). Lim and Teo found that cyber incivility was negatively related to organizational commitment and job satisfaction and positively related to deviance and turnover intention. The authors also differentiated between passive forms of cyber incivility which consists of email behaviour characterized by ignoring or showing little interest in the sender and active forms of cyber incivility which generally includes email behaviour that is confrontational displaying incivility openly. Active cyber incivility had stronger relations and more significant relations with work attitudes and behaviours. Males were also more likely to engage in active and direct forms of cyber incivility whereas females were more likely to engage in more passive forms of cyber incivility.

Research has also looked into the relationship between workplace incivility and affect. Pearson and Porath (2012) found that incivility led to greater feelings of anger, fear, and sadness. Using Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) affective events theory, Ghosh et al.(2011) predicted that experiencing negative mentoring behaviour would elicit negative protégé emotions and this would consequently trigger the protégé to engage in negative behaviour (i.e., workplace incivility) towards their mentor. In other words, the authors were trying to find evidence of



incivility spirals. The authors found that only when protégés perceived mentor distancing behaviour (e.g., lack of mentor attention to protégé's career development) did negative affect mediate the relationship between mentors' distancing behaviour and protégé instigated incivility. In contrast, when protégés perceived manipulative mentor behaviour (e.g., mentor's misuse of positional power), no mediating effect of negative affect was observed. There was, however, a significant positive relationship between manipulative mentor behaviour and protégé instigated incivility, which lends support to Andersson and Pearson's (1999) incivility spiral theory. Together, when protégés experienced distancing behaviour by their mentors, it elicited negative emotions, which prompted affect-driven behaviour. In this case the behaviour was being uncivil to their mentors.

When discussing why mentor manipulation did not prompt protégés to instigate incivility against their mentors via negative emotions, Ghosh et al. (2011) offered an array of explanations. Mentor manipulation might directly prompt incivility without negative emotion or it could be that negative emotion is only a mediator under certain conditions. Perhaps there are certain moderators that should be taken into account like the mentor's hierarchical position in the organization. By involving the employee or participant from the start by talking to them (rather than offering post hoc explanations), we might be in a better position to shed light on the structure and essence of the incivility spiral. Placing importance and stock in the content of participants' experiences with their mentor will be an important step forward into understanding how one set of behaviour can lead into another and under what conditions a spiral is most likely to happen. One way to gain a better understanding into employee workplace incivility experiences is to complement survey methodology with more qualitative methods such as interviews.

While most of the incivility literature focuses on the work outcomes, there has also been some scholarly investigation on the relationship between workplace incivility and non-work outcomes. Incivility often causes targets to spend time ruminating or worrying about the encounters. This can cause spill-over effects, resulting in individuals becoming increasingly distressed, and possibly adopting less effective coping behaviours like becoming angry or withdrawn from their work (Cortina & Magley, 2009). Lim and Lee (2011) hypothesized that such reactions might also interfere with employees' roles at home, making them less attentive to the needs of their family members or causing them to be more easily irritated by family members. And in fact, using data from 180 employees in various organizations in Singapore, Lim and Lee reported that experiencing incivility from one's supervisor was positively associated with work-to-family conflict. Since supervisors control important organizational resources (i.e., bonuses, promotions), employees might be unable to retaliate or get even and thus they transfer their frustration onto their family.

Another line of research in the workplace incivility literature focuses on behavioural outcomes of workplace incivility. Cortina and Magley (2009) investigated how incivility was appraised and which coping strategies employees used. To assess participants' appraisals of incivility, Cortina and Magley asked respondents to characterize their incivility experiences using single adjectives (e.g., offensive, embarrassing, annoying, etc.) on a three-point scale (*no*, *yes*, or ? if undecided). They found that workplace incivility was generally appraised as annoying, frustrating, and offensive and employees generally reacted by either avoiding the conflict or using the cognitive technique of minimization to downplay the seriousness of the situation. Some employees also tended to turn to an informal social network for support. These researchers attempted to understand how individuals perceive incivility by looking at appraisals.

The issue with asking participants to appraise their experiencing using one word adjectives and a three-point scale, however, is that experiencing incivility is a much more complex phenomenon that might not be best captured using simple categories and forced response formats. Participants need the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences and discuss the context in which they occurred. Through conducting interviews, not only are participants given voice, but researchers are also able to obtain a better understanding of the phenomenon of incivility.

The effects of workplace incivility can also extend beyond the victim and perpetrator, to those who have witnessed or observed workplace incivility. In an experimental study, Reich and Hershcovis (2015) studied how witnessing workplace incivility would affect an observer's reaction toward the target and instigator. Observers evaluated instigators of incivility less favorably and allocated more work to them than those who observed civil behaviour. Interestingly observers did not evaluate victims any differently nor compensate them (through a reduced work allocation). Reich and Hershcovis speculated that incivility is an interpersonal injustice whereas the compensation (reduced work allocation) is of a distributive nature, which observers might not perceive as an appropriate form of compensation. They also postulate that the ambiguous nature of incivility might not provide strong enough evidence for observers to feel the need to support victims of incivility. As previously suggested, one way to assess these interpretations is to involve the subject more directly in the research process. A qualitative approach such as in-depth interviews allows us to generate deeper insight into the phenomenon being investigated (Patton, 2015, p. 59)

In another study investigating employee reactions to workplace incivility, Trudel and Reio (2011) examined the role of conflict management styles in dealing with workplace incivility. Specifically, Trudel and Reio studied conflict management styles to see if they

predicted the frequency of instigating or experiencing workplace incivility. Individuals who use an integrating style of conflict management tend to show concern for both the goals of themselves and others. As such, they are less likely to be confrontational. Individuals with a dominant conflict management style, on the other hand, are mainly concerned with reaching their own goals even at the expense of others. These attitudes would therefore translate into individuals being uncivil towards others (or at least being perceived as such) and make it more likely for individuals with a dominant conflict management style to react in kind. As expected, they found that employees with an integrating conflict management style were less likely to be instigators or targets of workplace incivility, whereas those with a dominant conflict management style were significantly more likely to be instigators as well as targets.

The Trudel and Reio (2011) study was the first to link conflict management and workplace incivility in the literature. Although this is a good first step to understanding the incivility spiral and risk factors, Hershcovis and Cameron (2011), in an invited reaction to Trudel and Reio's study, pointed out several theoretical and methodological concerns. Although conflict management has the potential to provide insight into why some instances of workplace incivility escalate and intensify and others never do, it could nevertheless have been studied as a mediator or moderator of the relationship between target and instigator workplace incivility. Further, rather than examine target and instigator workplace-incivility separately, Trudel and Reio might have looked at instigated incivility as the outcome to experienced incivility. Moreover, while instigating incivility is definitely one potential outcome of experiencing incivility, it is not the only one. Forgiveness and reconciliation are other potential reactions. Yet when respondents are given limited options, they may not be able to effectively portray their incivility experiences.

As such, the second study of my dissertation proposes to explore how we can promote forgiveness in the workplace. The first study, however, seeks to understand how employees perceive their experiences of workplace incivility and the various ways in which they respond to it. In-depth interviews will provide detailed and descriptive data that serve to complement findings from past quantitative studies.

In a more general critique of the incivility literature, Hershcovis and Cameron (2011) noted that cross-sectional data do not get at the dynamic and complex nature of incivility spirals. Spirals occur over time with multiple exit and entry points making longitudinal designs better suited to tap into the nature of incivility spirals. To this end, Beattie and Griffin (2014b) conducted a longitudinal diary study to assess 130 employees' behavioural responses to workplace incivility over time. Employees were asked to complete eight daily surveys, over four weeks. The researchers examined whether there were within-person differences in how people responded to workplace incivility and if their responses could be predicted by variables such as status, attributions, or personality. In describing how they dealt with incivility experiences, participants responded by simply answering yes or no to a list of coping behaviours. Participants showed within- and between-person differences in how they responded to workplace incivility. Participants reported that they responded by either ignoring or avoiding their instigator, responding negatively towards their instigator, seeking support, or forgiving their instigator. Contrary to predictions, neither attributions of blame nor the status of the instigator predicted a target's response. In all responses, other than avoiding or ignoring the instigator, perceived severity of the uncivil incident significantly and positively predicted response type. This is in line with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) coping theory that suggests how an individual appraises a situation affects his/her response. More negative emotional reactions to incivility will require

more extreme behavioural responses. Although we know that different appraisals result in different responses, we are still not privy to the emotional and cognitive processes that go into making those appraisals nor do we know if the appraisal differs depending on the context of the incivility experience. Qualitative methods can offer researchers details, openness, and depth without being confined to predetermined categories and survey items. I believe qualitative methods are strongly needed in incivility research, as it is such a complex phenomenon that relies heavily on target perceptions and meaning. Furthering our understanding of how appraisals and responses unfold within individuals and across situations warrants a deeper investigation and more active involvement from the participant – something qualitative methods may be well suited for.

**Antecedents of workplace incivility.** The research on the antecedents of workplace incivility is growing. The literature examines antecedents that make it more likely for both, an individual to be a *target* of or *instigator* of workplace incivility. Below is a review of articles that have empirically investigated the likelihood that an employee is a target or instigator of workplace incivility.

***Antecedents of instigated incivility.*** Research on the antecedents of instigated incivility have fallen under two main categories: personality and situational factors. In their seminal work, Andersson and Pearson (1999) proposed two facilitators of incivility– hot temperament and an organizational climate of informality. In this theoretical work, Anderson and Pearson postulate that individuals who are impulsive, emotionally reactive, and rebellious are more likely to act and react aggressively. As well, in informal climates employees might find it easier to neglect norms for mutual respect and become disrespectful when interacting with colleagues, superiors, or subordinates.

The role of negative affect has also been theorized to be a facilitator of workplace incivility. Individuals with negative affect are generally anxious, angry, sad, and guilty (Watson & Clark, 1988). This disposition can induce negative moods, which can make an appraisal of a situation more negative than if an individual was low on negative affect. As such, individuals high on negative affect tend to interpret comments or behaviours by others as threatening thus provoking them to react uncivilly. In fact, with a convenience sample of 402 workers, Reio and Ghosh (2009) found that negative affect significantly predicted workplace incivility such that individuals who reported higher negative affectivity were more likely to be instigators of workplace incivility.

***Antecedents of workplace incivility victimization.*** Predictors of incivility victimizations have also focused on personality and situational factors. Milam, Spitzmueller, and Penney (2009) looked at individual differences in the Big Five among targets of workplace incivility. After surveying 197 full-time employees and their co-workers, Milam et al. reported that only agreeableness and neuroticism were related to workplace incivility victimization. Those high in Agreeableness were less likely to be a target of workplace incivility and those high in Neuroticism more likely to be a target. Agreeable individuals are generally cooperative and good-natured making it unlikely that they would be targets or instigators of workplace incivility. In line with Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), individuals who scored high on Neuroticism tended to react more negatively to work events. They were more likely to interpret ambiguous behaviour as negative and intentional which could then make them more confrontational. This provocative behaviour could make them obvious targets of workplace incivility.

In addition to personality differences, there are factors in the workplace, such as socialization and leadership that can promote workplace incivility. Using a snowball sample technique, Harold and Holtz (2015) looked at supervisor-employee dyads and found that passive leadership was significantly related to employees experiencing and instigating workplace incivility. Not only were employees more likely to experience workplace incivility at higher levels of passive leadership but they were also more likely to behave uncivilly themselves. In other words, this study provided evidence of workplace incivility spirals. Implicit in the definition of an incivility spiral is that the action is less important than the meaning a target assigns to the action. Understanding how individuals perceive others' behaviour is critical to understanding individual's emotional and behavioural responses. That being said, the knowledge gained from using measures like the WIS can be enhanced if we ask people directly about their experiences. Accordingly, qualitative methods like in-depth interviews stand to provide incivility researchers with an even greater understanding of the full incivility experience.

In another workplace incivility study investigating antecedents of victimization, Meier and Spector (2013) examined the reciprocal relationship between experienced workplace incivility and counter-productive work behaviours (CWB). According to the stressor-emotion model of CWB (Spector & Fox, 2005), employees who experience a negative emotion or appraise a situation as threatening are more likely to engage in negative behaviours like CWB. Thus, Meier and Spector expected to find that incivility led to CWB and that CWB led to incivility. Using 663 employees from a snowball sample and employing a cross-lagged design, Meier and Spector concluded that rather than a reciprocal relationship where both incivility and CWBs were prospectively and positively related to each other, experienced incivility was only the result of CWB and not the antecedent. In other words, employees became uncivil toward the



instigator of CWB and yet experiencing uncivil behaviour did not result in employees engaging in CWB. The results of the study suggest that workplace incivility is not a negative enough experience to lead to CWB. This was the first longitudinal study to examine the reciprocal relationship between work stressors (experienced incivility) and CWB and the authors postulated that perhaps the effects of experiencing incivility are fleeting, so future research should investigate the incivility spiral with a shorter time-lag (e.g., one day).

**Boundary conditions and causal pathways of the effects of workplace incivility.** As seen previously, a plethora of research has documented the role of workplace incivility in relation to well-being and work attitudes, as well as how dispositional and situational factors can predict workplace incivility. Many of these studies have also explored other variables that can have a buffering or mediating effect on the relationship between incivility, antecedents, and outcomes.

Miner, Settles, Pratt-Hyatt, and Brady (2012) tested whether social support could protect employees from the stress brought on by experiencing workplace incivility. They argued that social support can help employees either by altering the way in which they perceive or appraise the experience of incivility in the first place (i.e., stressful or not stressful) or by mitigating the negative effects of the incivility experience. The negative effects of incivility can be mitigated on an emotional level whereby employees receive comfort and encouragement from friends, family, or co-workers or they can receive support on an organizational level which shows individuals that their organization cares about them (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Similar to past studies, Miner et al. (2012) found that workplace incivility was negatively related to a wide range of well-being outcomes but more importantly these associations were weaker when employees reported feeling stronger levels of emotional and organization support.

Moderators and causal pathways have also been explored to understand the relationships between antecedents of workplace incivility and instigated incivility. Arguing that individuals who are more emotionally reactive are likely to instigate workplace incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), Meier and Semmer (2012) looked at whether work-related anger mediated the relationship between lack of reciprocity (or injustice) and instigated workplace incivility. According to the stressor-emotion model of counterproductive work behaviour, unfavorable work conditions and job stressors can result in counterproductive work behaviour (Spector & Fox, 2005). As well, according to social exchange theory (Homans, 1961), a lack of reciprocity is interpreted as a job stressor wherein an employee might not see an equitable balance between what he or she is investing at work and what he or she is receiving. One way to restore equity would be to engage in workplace incivility. Experiencing a lack of reciprocity would also tend to induce negative emotions such as anger. It has been widely documented that negative emotions play a key role in negative behaviour (e.g., Berkowitz, 1993; Spector, 1997); it follows that when an employee feels angry, he or she will be more likely to instigate instances of workplace incivility. In support of their hypothesis, Meier and Semmer found that anger mediated the relationship between lack of reciprocity and instigating workplace incivility.

Meier and Semmer (2012) then investigated if the specified mediation (i.e., lack of reciprocity → anger → instigated incivility) was moderated by narcissism. Narcissistic individuals tend to be impulsive and have difficulty controlling their emotions. Andersson and Pearson (1999) would argue these traits facilitate workplace incivility. As hypothesized, Meier and Semmer found that lack of reciprocity was more strongly related to uncivil behaviours among individuals high in narcissism.

Other personality traits have been investigated as moderators of the relationship between incivility and other forms of aggression. Taylor and Kluemper (2012) first looked at whether experiencing incivility would mediate the relationship between perceived role stress and workplace aggression, and found that role ambiguity and role conflict were positively and significantly related to workplace aggression. Second, Taylor and Kluemper were also interested in how the mediation would differ depending on different levels of neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. They argued that individuals who reported high levels of neuroticism and low levels of both agreeableness and conscientiousness would be highly sensitive to people's behaviour towards them and hence more likely to perceive themselves as victims of workplace incivility and to reciprocate with aggression. As expected, the mediated relationships were stronger at high levels of neuroticism and low levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness. Even if incivility is considered as low intensity, the tit-for-tat nature of its spirals encourages the escalation of minor hassles to stronger and more intense reactions.

Another important moderator is power. While a full review of the power literature is outside the scope of this dissertation, many studies have investigated the role of power in social interactions and the relation between mistreatment and outcomes (i.e., Fiske, 2011; Frone, 2000; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Heilman & Eagley, 2008; Materson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor 2000). Research has generally found that low-status individuals are more likely to be mistreated.

Another variable that moderates the relationship between incivility and negative outcomes is resiliency. Using data from 272 new graduate nurses, Laschinger, et al. (2013) examined the relationship between workplace incivility and mental health and the protective role of resiliency. They argued that nurses with greater personal resiliency might be better equipped to deal with workplace incivility. Resilient individuals are able to effectively cope with setbacks

and challenging circumstances (King & Rothstein, 2010; McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013) and thus would report better mental health outcomes. Results showed that resiliency partially mediated the relation between workplace incivility, particularly from co-workers, and mental health outcomes implying that resiliency can mitigate the negative effects caused by workplace incivility.

Chen et al., (2013) looked at the mediating role of engagement in the relationship between workplace incivility and task performance. The authors postulated that workplace incivility undermines an employee's sense of self or worth, and results in withdrawal, which can be manifested as decreased work engagement. The authors also showed that the effect between incivility and engagement was moderated by an individual's level of narcissism as narcissists are more likely to perceive uncivil behaviour as an attack on their self-worth and have more motivation to protect themselves. Given the link between incivility and work engagement and task performance, organizations should be quite concerned regarding the practical implications of these findings.

As the review above shows, workplace incivility research has more often than not been studied through cross-sectional self-report surveys, which makes it difficult to infer causality. Unfortunately, only a few studies have used longitudinal data and experimental designs. In one of the few experimental studies, Giumetti et al. (2013) manipulated incivility and supervisor support in a cyber-context to see their effects on psychological and performance outcomes. Again, in line with conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), Giumetti et al. regarded workplace incivility as a stressor that depletes resources and that to cope with the experience, employees are likely to disengage from the task at hand, experience more negative affect, and report lower levels of energy. Support from one's supervisors was theorized to help maintain

resources and thus have a buffering effect. Eighty-four undergraduate students completed a math assignment online where each question was paired with a supportive (e.g., “I really appreciate your efforts on these tasks”) or uncivil statement (e.g., “I couldn’t be less confident in your abilities, but here is the next set anyway”) from a supervisor. As expected participants in the uncivil condition reported lower energy, less positive affect, higher negative affect, and performed more poorly than participants in the supportive condition. As well, both energy and engagement mediated the relationship between condition and task performance. In others words, emotional energy and engagement predicted task performance in the uncivil condition only. This study provided further evidence of the negative effects of workplace incivility and that cyber incivility can be just as harmful as face-to-face incivility.

In a diary study, Beattie and Griffin (2014a) studied daily fluctuations in workplace incivility and how it affected stress and engagement. As predicted, individuals reported more stress on days that they experienced more incivility. This relationship was also stronger when employees reported lower levels of supervisors’ support, which is in line with the job-demand and resources model (Demerouti, Nakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Though they did not find an overall decrease in engagement as a result of incivility, they did find that core self-evaluations (CSE) moderated the relationship such that employees with low CSE experienced lower levels of work engagement as a result of incivility. Individuals with higher CSE were more immune to negative behaviour.

### **Rationale for Study One**

As evidenced from the review above, researchers have sought to investigate and understand incivility by quantifying it. However, by using qualitative methods, we stand to gain even more insight into the incivility experience. Qualitative methods allow researchers to get at

participants' inner thoughts and their emotional, behavioural, and cognitive reactions to the events. As such, the first objective of this dissertation was to study incivility using qualitative methods. Qualitative methods can complement the findings of quantitative findings by providing even more refined information and greater insight into the incivility experience that may not be easily identified through surveys (Arnkoff, Glass, Elkin, Levy, & Gershefski, 1996; Patton, 2015).

Conducting research through phenomenological methods, which allows participants to recall situations where they were treated rudely, is experiential and qualitative. A qualitative phenomenological approach can help extract the full meaning and richness of human experiences. It is subject-centered rather than method-centered which arguably increases our chances of selecting more meaningful explorations and research questions (van Kamam, 1966, as cited in Moustakas, 1994).

### **Rationale for Study Two**

Given the negative impact of incivility, it is important to develop strategies to combat the effects of such mistreatment. To this end, Leiter et al., (2011) and Leiter, Day, Gilin Oore, and Laschinger (2012) assessed the impact of a civility intervention (Civility, Respect, and Engagement at Work; CREW; Osatuke, Moore, Ward, Dyrenforth, & Belton, 2009) on employee social behaviour, distress, and attitudes before and directly after civility training and one year later.

Over a period of six months, trained facilitators met regularly with work groups with the intent of helping employees create a respectful and civil work environment. Meetings were held in which facilitators discussed how to improve the work environment, and encouraged problem-

solving. The meetings provided employees with an opportunity to practice new behaviours and learn ways of interacting with the goal of making these behaviours the norm.

The Leiter et al. studies found this intervention strategy was effective. Individuals who received civility training showed greater improvements in civility and respect than those who had not received any training. Training also reduced supervisor incivility and participants reported lower levels of burnout and turnover intentions, and higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment directly after training and one year after training (Leiter et al., 2012).

CREW is one of the only interventions and initiatives in the literature whose goal is to increase civility and respect in the workplace. Although it shows very promising results, change is slow and geared towards organizational development rather than employee health. It also requires trained facilitators, making CREW potentially inaccessible to the average human-resources manager. As such, even though CREW's positive effects are considerable and long-lasting, organizations might be hesitant to use this initiative due to financial concerns and time commitments. Thus, a second objective of this dissertation was to explore other strategies that help employees buffer or manage responses to workplace incivility. One potential and promising strategy is through increased mindfulness.

Mindfulness may be one way to mitigate the negative outcomes associated with workplace incivility. Mindfulness is usually defined as the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 822). Mindfulness helps individuals become better at self-control both behaviourally and cognitively. Rather than respond to incivility with more incivility or escalating aggressive behaviour, employees who are mindful can choose to respond by avoiding or ignoring their perpetrator, forgiving them, or reconciling with them. Therefore, the second objective of this dissertation was to investigate the role of

mindfulness as a regulatory factor by examining whether it mitigates the negative relationship between incivility and well-being and if it can promote more positive reactions to incivility.



## CHAPTER TWO: Study One

Workplace incivility has mainly been studied using surveys, diary entries, and experiments. These methods have provided scholars and practitioners with a wealth of information surrounding the predictors and consequences of workplace incivility, as well as boundary conditions and causal processes. While we know a lot about workplace incivility – mainly its nomological network – we still do not have a clear idea on *what* actually makes up the incivility experience or rather, *how* people make sense of an incivility experience. This line of inquiry is best studied by taking a phenomenological descriptive approach. Phenomenology is a philosophy, theory, and method for studying human phenomena with a focus on the lived experience of everyday life and the unique, personal interpretation of the experiential world (Sidani & Sechrest, 1996). The premise of phenomenology is that what people perceive and describe is important because people construct their own reality based on their experiences.

A phenomenological approach to workplace incivility will help describe the experience of workplace incivility, but will also help us understand how the same event can be interpreted differently or similarly by different people (Soafer, 1999). A phenomenological approach is best suited to answer these questions as it can provide richer meaning and deeper understanding of the lived experience than a survey would. A phenomenological approach focuses on events that are important to the individual and relevant to their well-being. Asking about the frequency with which employees have encountered certain behaviours – which is how incivility is usually studied – does not allow us to make strong inferences about whether the behaviour was upsetting to them or not. Through a qualitative phenomenological approach, we may enhance our understanding of the contexts surrounding the events as well as the events themselves. What is more important perhaps, is that through interviews participants are given the opportunity to

speak in their own voice, rather than have it conform to categories and terms imposed on them by a survey instrument.

This goal of this study was to present a narrative description of the phases of the workplace incivility experience or elements of the phenomenon. Workplace incivility is a complex phenomenon and using qualitative techniques can help illuminate the experience of incivility and the interpretations of these experiences by the participants. Specifically, the questions I sought to answer included: How is incivility experienced? What do people tell themselves about those who are rude to them at work? What efforts do people make to deal with incivility?

As mentioned before, quantitative methods have been overwhelmingly used to explore workplace incivility. This is unfortunate as workplace incivility involves complex interactions between the person and environment and complex interrelationships between the target and perpetrator. By using more flexible methods, we may be able to increase our understanding of workplace incivility. Accordingly, qualitative methods were appropriate for the current study of incivility.

The meaning people attribute to workplace incivility is constructed through the individual's interaction with the environment. Different people interpret things differently. By focusing on an individual's meaning of incivility, and specific events, which may or may not have been considered uncivil, researchers can gain insight into the characteristics of instigators and targets, the nature of their relationship before, during, and after the incident, and how employees react to and cope with being treated rudely. Below I briefly discuss current findings on workplace incivility and how using qualitative methods might enrich our knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon.

A survey study by Gallus et al. (2014) found that experiencing incivility predicted instigating incivility. In other words, one consequence of experiencing incivility is instigating it in return. This study then speaks to the tit-for-tat incivility spiral Andersson and Pearson (1999) discussed in their seminal article. However, we know little about *what makes individuals instigate* incivility or if they were the target or perpetrator *first*; we only know that people can be both an instigator and a target. We also do not know the reasons behind their decision to instigate incivility. Gallus et al. explain that a spiral unfolds because of individuals' desire to retaliate. In their *survey* study, however, individual desires are never accounted for nor measured in the methods or results; the desire to retaliate is only speculated about in the discussion section.

Gallus et al. (2014) are among the many traditional psychologists who examine a situation using quantitative methods, without being sensitive to a respondent's way of being in the world (Karlsson, 1993). Traditional psychologists attempts to construct the world around them. For example, if participants have to choose between options A or B, researchers will interpret any choice they make in terms of an abstract theory or derived theoretical perspective, without regard to the subject's experiences. A phenomenological study on the other hand would try to understand the subject's experiences in order to contextualize the phenomenon. Rather than remove the subject from the phenomenon, a phenomenological approach aims to clarify how a phenomenon is created through the meaning given to it by a subject. As incivility research has primarily been concerned with explaining what causes incivility or what it results in, a phenomenological approach will complement and benefit the literature. The current study aimed to break from this tradition and use complementary qualitative methods to enhance our understanding of the experience of incivility.

Few studies have looked at workplace incivility using qualitative methods. In a multi-method study, Pearson, Andersson, and Wegner (2001) examined how incivility differs from other workplace mistreatment and implications of incivility for employees and organizations. Results of focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires shed light on the characteristics of incivility (i.e., ambiguous intent, low intensity, and violation of workplace norms for respect) and show that it can lead to negative outcomes, for the individual and the organization. Their study mainly focused on law enforcement officers and emergency medical professionals, suggesting future research should examine a more diverse population. Additionally, Pearson et al. investigated the nature of incivility and outcomes, without detailing the process or how employees experience it. Cortina et al. (2002) conducted a mixed-methods study looking at gendered incivility in federal courts. Participants responded to open-ended questions describing a mistreatment experience as well as what happened if they had made a complaint or why they chose not to formally report the experience. The authors coded for different types of mistreatment (e.g., dishonesty, exclusion, gender disparagement), victims' responses to the behaviour (confronting, formal/informal reporting) and reasons for not reporting (e.g., futility).

Other qualitative investigations of incivility are limited to the nursing education sector (e.g., Fontana, 2009; Walrath, Dang, & Nyberg, 2010). For instance, Clark and Springer (2007) conducted a study to determine perceptions of incivility in nursing education. They asked participants (faculty and student) to write about uncivil behaviours they witnessed or experienced. The authors identified different types of behaviour (e.g., students using cellphones or sleeping in class; faculty member being unavailable outside of class). This study was limited to nursing education making the items very education-centric. Moreover, the study did not

examine why the behaviour is considered problematic and what impact it has on students and faculty.

Additionally, although incivility is often discussed using a social interactionist approach, it is hardly ever studied that way. To understand the phenomenon as a whole, including its process-based foundation, one needs to focus on the personal and situational factors that make up an incivility experience. Using qualitative methods, we can gain a better and more holistic understanding of the social interaction. For example, Bunk, Karabin, and Lear (2011) attempted to understand why employees engage in rude behaviours using a social interactionist perspective, by exploring employees' justifications for engaging in interpersonal deviance at work. Nonetheless, participants were only presented with three choices to explain why they engaged in the behaviour: power assertion, retaliation, and no reason. These categories fail to capture the detail and intricacy of interpersonal deviance and the complex processes described by the social interactionist approach. Bunk et al. discussed that since many participants justified their behaviour with a retaliation response this "implies a cyclical nature to interpersonal deviance in that the actors may also be the targets" (p. 79). While they speculated why individuals endorsed each of the justifications, in the end, these remain speculations. Without involving the participant and getting his or her perspective, knowledge on incivility experiences remains limited.

It is clear that researchers have so far taken a positivist or post-positivist approach to workplace incivility. In psychological research, however, this can be problematic as individuals' perception of workplace incivility, and the context in which it occurs can be different. The same experience of workplace incivility may mean very different things (e.g., uncivil or civil) to different people or may mean something different to the same person depending on the context. Is there an interaction between the person and environment that results in a negative and

distressing perception of a behaviour? Accordingly, I take a phenomenological approach to the study of workplace mistreatment whereby I focused on the meaning participants attach to their experience of workplace incivility. Taking a phenomenological approach might enable researchers to obtain real insight into the intricacies and complexities of workplace incivility. It should be made clear though that using this approach does not supersede previous research on workplace incivility. Rather, this approach is intended to supplement and complement existing knowledge and research.

### **Study One Purpose and Research Questions**

This dissertation sought to understand how incivility occurs in the workplace. Qualitative methods were chosen to allow participants to provide their own account of how the events develop and happen in each context and what events, behaviours, emotions, or cognition lead to what consequences (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 2002). The participants' interpretations are central to the experience of workplace incivility, which also makes qualitative methods the appropriate choice of methodology (Bachiochi & Weiner, 2002). Participants cannot fully explain why they feel or react the way they do with survey items or closed-ended questions. By giving the participant a voice, we might obtain interpretations previously unidentified in the literature (Patton, 2015). As such, the overarching research question is “*How do people perceive and describe their experiences of workplace incivility?*”

Within this overarching research question, I aimed to understand several issues regarding the relativity of the experience by allowing participants to describe what incivility is and what it means to them and giving them the opportunity to tell their stories of incivility. Within the overarching research questions, I addressed four specific questions. First, *how do employees make sense of an incivility experience?* By asking them for a historical account of their

experiences, I hope to obtain a deep and rich history. The goal with this research question is to move away from quantitative factors and focus on the qualitative factors surrounding behaviour and experience.

The second research question asked: *how do employees perceive intentionality?* One of the defining features of workplace incivility is ambiguous intent. Can employees perceive certain behaviour as uncivil but depending on the situation or instigator, perceive the intent differently? If they interpret the situation as an oversight, is the impact less negative? A big component of incivility is understanding how people make sense of each situation. Exploring sense-making and perceptions could help the field understand why the same incivility experience can be interpreted differently by different people, or differently by the same person in different situations.

Following from the question on intentionality, is the issue of *how do people react or respond to incivility experiences?* This research questions explores participants' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses to incivility that current research might not capture or anticipate. For example, do perceived differences in intentionality dictate how employees will react? Understanding how individuals perceive others' behaviour will shed light on how they chose to respond as well as how these experiences can affect their relationship with others.

The fourth and related research question explored was *what influences employees to react or respond the way they do?* Incivility may be troublesome and irritating to most people, but people's reactions can vary. For example, some people may retaliate while others ignore the event or avoid the perpetrator. People can minimize the significance of the event, or seek formal or informal support. Employees' choice of response is likely to be influenced by a number of things such as: perceived balance of power, duration or intensity of the experience, and frequency of interaction with the instigator. Ultimately the intent of the fourth research question

was to uncover what triggers, or stops people from engaging in, escalating mistreatment behaviour.

Remaining true to qualitative phenomenological research, I refrained from making predictions or hypothesizing about causal relationships. The research questions I investigated are framed in a way to reveal more fully the essence and meaning of employees' experiences with workplace incivility.

## **Method**

### **Sampling strategy**

The present study aimed to explore an incivility incident individuals had experienced in the workplace. Accordingly, the only inclusion criterion for the study was that participants had to have work experience. This was deemed appropriate as the goal of the study was to gather information on incivility experiences from a wide range of occupations and industries to see what commonalities emerged.

Ethics approval was obtained from The University of Western Ontario (see Appendix A). Respondents were recruited through my professional and personal network. My contacts sent emails to individuals they knew had experienced rude treatment at work (see Appendix B). After receiving the recruitment emails, individuals interested in participating were requested to contact me via email. Through email, a mutually agreeable time to conduct the interview was arranged. Four interviews were conducted face-to-face, two interviews were conducted via a video teleconference, and phone interviews were scheduled for the remaining participants. Respondents were offered a \$10 gift card to Starbucks for participating in the study.



**Sample**

I continued to collect data until data collection and analyses revealed no new information, that is, until I reached data saturation (Patton, 2015). The final sample consisted of 16 respondents. Respondents' age ranged from 24 to 61, with an average age of 34.07 ( $SD = 9.66$ ). The sample consisted of nine females and six males. Length of employment ranged from six months to 24 years ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = 6.09$ ). Respondents worked in the following industries: accommodation and food services, health care and social assistance, professional and scientific services, finance, educational services, as well as administration and support. The self-reported job titles of the respondents included assistant professor, project coordinator, nurse, associate professor, clinical manager, sales representative, office manager, supply chain analyst, bartender, research lead, teaching and learning coordinator, business analyst, and graduate student.

**Data collection**

Respondents were interviewed individually. I conducted all the interviews to ensure that I was aware of any key themes or problems that emerged. Given that I was interested in participants' experiences, perceptions, and reactions, verbal accounts were deemed most appropriate as they would provide me with rich content unattainable from surveys or observations.

The interview protocol is provided in Appendix C. The letter of information and consent form (see Appendix D) were emailed to participants prior to the interview. The purpose of the study was explained again once participants were contacted by phone or arrived for the interview. Participants were asked to sign the consent form as well as to verbally consent to being recorded during the interview. Participants were reassured that their responses would be confidential. I also explained how data collected from interviews would be aggregated to themes

so that their individual responses could not be identified. All participants consented to the audio recording. Interviews ranged from 17 to 58 minutes with an average length of 35 minutes.

The language of the interview questions was fairly open to encourage discussion without providing leading questions (see Appendix C). For example, rather than ask: “did your relationship with the perpetrator change?”, I asked the more open-ended questions: “how did your relationship with the perpetrator change?” This allowed the respondent to describe the experience as he or she perceived it, rather than respond with a “yes” or “no” response. In total, 13 general interview questions were asked. These questions were merely used as a guide and to provide some structure and direction to the conversation. If needed, probing questions were used to encourage respondents to provide more detail. Where appropriate, I deviated from the interview guide in order to enhance the richness of the data collected. After asking all the interview questions, I verbally debriefed the participants (see Appendix D).

### **Analytical Procedures**

#### **Transcribing the Interviews**

I manually transcribed all interviews verbatim. Transcripts were de-identified and participants were assigned pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality. Conducting all the interviews myself, as well as transcribing them, afforded me the opportunity to become immersed with the data, which according to Patton (2015) is an “experience that can generate unique insights” (p.525). Indeed, as I was transcribing the interviews various commonalities across the different interviews emerged. At the same time, I also noted differences in how interviewees described events and feelings. When this happened, I made notes onto the transcript comparing and contrasting it to another.

### **Data Reduction, Bracketing, and Theme Analysis**

Data reduction is a big component of qualitative analysis as it uncovers the elements and essential structures of the phenomenon (Spencer, Ritchie, & O'Connor, 2005). The first component of data reduction is locating the key phrases and statements that reflected the experience of incivility. In my first reading of the full transcripts, I highlighted those statements I deemed most important and relevant to the experience of incivility. In a second reading – once the significant phrases and statements were identified – I then interpreted the meaning of those phrases by assigning preliminary labels to the data. This allowed me then to identify and organize labels into key concepts, themes and categories. In this stage I eliminated duplications in the labels as well as incorporated new labels, where appropriate. I then analyzed the data a third time whereby I also focused on eliminating duplications and remaining open to new concepts. Coding was initially done by hand and at the later stages analyzed and documented in NVivo (QRI International, 2010).

### **Imaginative Variation and Category Development**

In this stage of data analysis, I organized the data into meaningful clusters. I was specifically interested in identifying the invariant themes based on whether the element contains a moment of the experience that is required to understand it and whether it is possible to label that moment. This again, required that I eliminate overlapping and repetitive labels. For instance, many of the interviewees talked about a lapse in communication when discussing the incivility incident. Although participants used different phrases (e.g., “can’t see eye to eye”, “going back and forth”), it still represented instances of *miscommunication* which was essential to understanding how incivility is perceived.

### **Synthesis of Test and Structure**

The final steps of my analysis revolved around detecting patterns (Spencer et al., 2005). I made sure to constantly compare stories, compare labels, compare categories, and compare findings with current theory. I was interested in discovering similarities in experience across interviewees as well as noting when there were differences. Detecting the patterns in how individuals experience incivility allowed me integrate the results of the analysis into an exhaustive description workplace incivility (Beck, 1992; Colaizzi, 1978; Patton, 2015).

### **Study Trustworthiness and Authenticity**

A qualitative study is trustworthy and authentic if it is credible, transferable, and dependable (Creswall & Miller, 2000; Koch, 2006). In an effort to limit potential bias, I took a number of measures to ensure the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study. First, interviews were transcribed verbatim. Second, interviews were read and analyzed multiple times; I made an active effort to question each label, remove redundancies, and insert new labels. Finally, at each stage of the analysis, I discussed my findings and inferences with an independent qualitative researcher. This involved having a second reader independently code a transcript and then discuss the labels each of us had assigned to the data.

## **Results**

The primary goal of this qualitative research was to describe the lived experience of incivility amongst participants. This experience was captured across several elements: (a) the incident, (b) initial reactions, (c) the sense-making process, and (d) the after-math. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the flow of events.

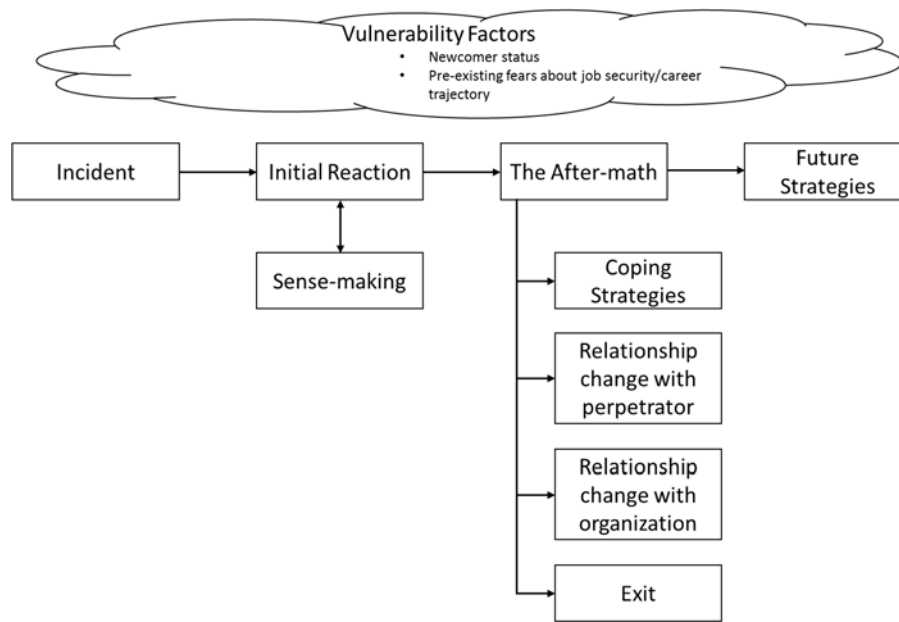


Figure 1. Visual representation of incivility experience

### The Incident

Participants generally started by describing the incident at hand. Participants talked about an incident involving either a colleague, a boss/supervisor, or a subordinate (see Table 1). Some participants expressed doubt as to whether their experience was uncivil and worth talking about

Table 1

#### *Participant and perpetrator characteristics*

Participant	Participant Sex	Perpetrator Sex	Perpetrator Position
Lisa	Female	Female	Colleague
Sally	Female	Male	Boss
Margaret	Female	Female	Colleague
Jack	Male	Male	Boss
Michael	Male	Female	Boss
Travis	Male	Female	Colleague
Timothy	Male	Male	Subordinate

Bob	Male	Male	Boss
Henry	Male	Male	Colleague
Gigi	Female	Female	Colleague
Elizabeth	Female	Female	Colleague
Sara	Female	Male	Boss
Andrea	Female	Male	Colleague
Janelle	Female	Male	Subordinate
Sandra	Female	Male	Colleague

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*Note.* Participants names are pseudonyms

whereas other participants were quick to draw on an experience. A common phrase used by participants when describing the incident was how the perpetrator's behaviour was "*inappropriate*". The behaviour described was generally deemed unsuitable for the workplace and in any social interactions. Participants also described how the incident "*stays*" or "*sticks with you*" and that is why they know it is uncivil.

The incidents in this study varied in behaviour and severity. They included: being yelled at, being addressed in unprofessional terms (e.g., "*kiddo*"), someone doubting their competence, being ignored, being interrupted, or demeaned. One participant spoke about a colleague refusing to help her with a non-time-consuming task. A few participants also described incidents where the perpetrator had informed their supervisor that the participant had made "*a series of errors*" even though the participant felt their performance was not "*detrimental*" or was just "*differences in practice*." Additionally, some participants provided one isolated event, whereas others described the incident over a series of events and time. What underlined these events and others is that the participant generally perceived the perpetrator's action to be an exaggeration.

*There was something that I had done that involved typing, putting together this document. And so, I had mistyped something, which happens, and the person I had typed it for was pretty upset by that. Then instead of talking to me about it, [she] had gone over my head, quite high, and raised an attitude issue... a gross exaggeration of an event* (Elizabeth)

*Where is this coming from? It seems like a disproportionate response to what had just happened* (Timothy; subordinate raising their voice after participant was sharp to them)

As participants recalled the incident, the role of communication emerged as a common theme. Communication contributed to what made the incident uncivil and why it lingered in participants' minds.

**Breakdown in communication.** A key component in participants' stories was a perceived breakdown in communication or a failure to communicate constructively. Many participants noted they felt unable to have "*a conversation*" with their perpetrator. Indeed, many participants felt "*frustrated*" and "*anxious*" when the perpetrator could not understand what they were saying. When the victim and perpetrator could not see "*eye-to-eye*", this reinforced the feeling that the perpetrator did not appreciate or understand the participant's job role or that the perpetrator was simply not interested in having a constructive dialogue with the participant to try and solve the issue at hand.

*He [perpetrator] didn't care what was happening, he didn't want to talk about solutions* (Male, Jack; in response to getting yelled out for an event that was outside his control)

Although many times, participants attributed the breakdown in communication to the perpetrator being "*unreasonable*" and "*not wanting to listen,*" in a couple of instances, participants acknowledged their own role in the incident. These participants recognized that the

way they reacted or spoke to the perpetrator might have further contributed to the uncivil incident, rather than help resolve it.

*It was almost as though he [perpetrator] couldn't see what I was actually trying to say and could just hear one thing of it. I don't know to be honest if I worded it the wrong way, like I probably could have worded it better. I get quite defensive quickly when someone starts to get heated with me, you know when their tone changes I can get defensive. (Sara)*

**Issue Dump.** A few participants noted that the incident also involved their perpetrator airing their grievances about other issues.

For some participants, the incident turned into ‘everything but the kitchen sink’ situation, where their perpetrator took the opportunity to bring up other issues. This was not perceived to be “*constructive*”, but more so that the perpetrator could point out other grievances. One participant whose job involved driving described a “*heated*” exchange between her and one of her bosses when he said he was “*disappointed*” that she wanted to wait for better weather before driving around the province of British Colombia.

*Then he brought that up in the meeting and, once that came out, everything came out. Everything he was mad about it with me came out (Sara)*

Overall, the findings from this phase help provide answers to the overarching research question: “*how do people perceive and describe their experiences of workplace incivility?*” Incivility is inappropriate behaviour. An incivility incident is usually described as an interaction between victim and perpetrator, whereby the role of communication is critical to the experience. Ineffective communication generally added to the severity of the incident, such that employees were more frustrated and anxious when they were unable to make their point heard and/or



understood to the perpetrator.

Below, initial reactions to the event are outlined as the next element of participants' stories.

### **Initial Reactions**

Participants' initial reactions usually involved an emotional reaction. A pattern emerged amongst participants' initial reactions: Undoubtedly, the most common reactions participants associated with the event were shock and disbelief. For participants who described the behaviour as inappropriate, they expressed disbelief at the incident and described being "*caught off guard*". For example, one participant described her feelings after having been "*ghosted*" [i.e., ignored] in the hallway by a colleague.

*Well there's a bit of disbelief, like is this actually happening right now? (Lisa)*

These feelings of disbelief only happened for participants who characterized the behaviour as inappropriate. Those who did not see the behaviour as inappropriate were more likely to believe that the behaviour was due to perpetrator characteristics, contextual factors, or previous interactions with the perpetrator. One participant described his boss as unreasonable, but said she behaved that way because "*she wanted me out of the lab.*" Another participant was not surprised at all by his colleague's behaviour:

*This was [perpetrator] being [perpetrator]. I know him and that's kind of his style...he didn't surprise me. (Henry)*

Common feelings experienced following the uncivil incident were frustration, anger, and hurt. Many of the participants expressed feeling confused, offended, and upset following the incident. Three female participants also mentioned crying over the perpetrator's behaviour. One of the participants cried over the intensity of the experience (being yelled at) whereas the other

two participants cried due to the implications of the perpetrator's behaviour. Specifically, the perpetrator's behaviour elicited fear over their prospective career or job security. Although crying was not a very common reaction, more participants noted feeling immediately anxious. Some participants also described feeling embarrassed. Participants were either embarrassed about what others might think of them or how this would reflect on their competence. As one participant described:

*I don't think I was angry, I was more embarrassed...how would this affect their [staff] view of my performance. Were they [staff] now going to think I wasn't able to handle this transaction? (Andrea; in response to being yelled at by a colleague for not processing his claims in a "timely" manner)*

Other participants also described feeling embarrassed, but the embarrassment was outwardly focused on the perpetrator and the organization. One participant felt that the perpetrator's behaviour and the organization's lack of response was an "*embarrassment for the [organization]*".

Interestingly, a couple of interviewees mentioned being curious about the perpetrator's behaviour:

*...I went just out of more curiosity, kind of (to) see where it was like how it was going to play out... (Sally; in response to being called into an impromptu meeting in the late afternoon on a Friday)*

Overall, the most common initial reaction to the uncivil incident was disbelief. Participants also commonly experienced anxiety and anger. Several participants experienced embarrassment either for themselves or for their perpetrator and/or organization.

### The sense-making process

Participants' initial reactions were concurrent with their attempt to rationalize the event or make sense of it. Of note, these processes were intertwined such that participants' feelings about the situation influenced how they made sense of it and vice versa. This process of sense-making was dominant throughout the whole interview and experience.

Participants described thinking through the incident, attempting to reason or rationalize the incident, providing justifications for what had transpired, and/or trying to decipher the perpetrator's intention. Participants often described their incident, including why the incident had occurred in the first place, by describing characteristics of the perpetrator. For instance, perpetrators were described as "*controlling*", "*abrasive*", and "*temperamental*".

Participants offered several explanations that helped them make sense of the incident: (a) the perpetrator had a reputation for engaging in unpleasant behaviour, (b) the perpetrator felt insecure in his/her role or threatened, (c) the perpetrator was generally overbearing or controlling, (d) the perpetrator wanted to alienate the participant, (e), the perpetrator needed a scapegoat and (f) the perpetrator wanted to showcase his or her power. Being a scapegoat, alienation, and showcasing power were the more common ways in which participant made sense of the incident. As such, I elaborate on these three below:

**Alienating the victim.** One participant described how his supervisor made him stay at his work station and questioned him whenever he got up to go to the other side of the room. Another participant described the perpetrator's behaviour as "*stand-off-ish*". One participant perceived their perpetrator's goal was to "*haze*" other employees. These participants felt the perpetrator behaved in a rude way to exclude them [the participant] from the conversation or group at times.

*He [perpetrator] actually sent a message to [colleague] as well saying we shouldn't talk*

*to [participant] anymore. (Sandra)*

**Needing a scapegoat.** One participant perceived her perpetrator had used her as a “scapegoat;” whenever something would go wrong, he would blame her. This participant made sense of this incident by acknowledging that the perpetrator knew she didn’t have the resources to fight back or confront him and because she was “fairly low on the totem pole.” Another participant said his company always blamed his department: “*whenever something went wrong, it was always our fault.*”

*We’d have little mini explosion. Things that weren’t really my fault. But he [perpetrator] had to blame somebody. (Andrea)*

**Showcasing power.** An overarching theme was the notion of power displays. In making sense of the incident, many participants inferred that the perpetrators’ behaviour and actions were to demonstrate superiority, authority, and power. Although some of the perpetrators were in a superior role relative to the victim, many were colleagues who worked in a parallel role, and a couple were subordinates. These participants also felt their perpetrators’ rude behaviour was intended to be a display of power, regardless of whether or not they were in an authoritative role. The goal of the behaviour was to establish their seniority and authority.

*He wanted to look like a big man in front of a couple of other people in the room who were his employees. (Sara; in response to meeting with a supervisor who was demeaning and critical)*

Within the theme of power displays, a few female participants identified their workplace and industry to be heavily male dominated – “*a boy’s club.*” These participants described male perpetrators’ behaviour as “*demeaning*” and “*frustrating*”. Each of the perpetrators were also described to be significantly older than the female interviewees. In each of these incidents, the

male perpetrator was critical of the participant's performance. For instance, one participant was criticized by her manager after she had "*reminded him of [a work] process*".

*He just proceeded to tell me that I was emotional, that I was becoming emotional and that everything that I do in my work is emotional. And that I don't know how to take the emotion out of it [the job]. And he was telling me that I was too aggressive and too assertive for my role as a coordinator...* (Sally)

The participant went on to say that her manager "*had trouble seeing eye to eye with women*" And that "*if anybody else had reminded him of the process, he would have taken it better.*"

Table 2 shows how many participants described the incident as a breakdown in communication, experienced disbelief, and whether they perceived intent as means to alienate them, use them as a scapegoat, or display power.

Table 2  
*Findings across Participants*

Participant	Communication	Disbelief	Alienation	Scapegoat	Power
Lisa		✓			
Sally	✓				✓
Margaret		✓	✓		
Jack	✓			✓	✓
Michael	✓			✓	
Travis	✓	✓			✓
Timothy		✓			
Bob	✓				✓
Henry			✓		
Gigi		✓			
Elizabeth	✓	✓	✓		
Sara	✓	✓			✓
Andrea	✓			✓	
Janelle	✓			✓	
Sandra		✓	✓		✓

### The After-math

The after-math of the incident referred to how participants responded to the incident. In line with my research question “*how do people react or respond to incivility experiences,*” this depended on the perpetrator’s behaviour and participants’ sense-making. When the perpetrator’s behaviour was a regular occurrence or part of his/her reputation, participants had expressed “*shrugging off*” the incident. On the other hand, some participants treated incidents as “*watershed moments*” where they knew their next action would be to exit the organization.

*As soon as the conversation was over I was thinking about quitting. I wanted to actually just leave before my shift was done. I ended up quitting the next day. (Bob)*

In the moment, a couple of participants described engaging with the perpetrator to try and make them understand their viewpoint. One participant remained convinced that confronting the perpetrator was the best decision and was happy he had stood up for himself.

In contrast, another participant described the conversation as “*going nowhere*” and thus adopted a “*yes man*” approach in consequent interactions whereby she would “*just say yes, no problem...*” Participants who did not confront their perpetrator engaged in a variety of other behaviours and coping mechanisms. A couple of interviewees noted how even though the behaviour was inappropriate, they tried to laugh about it after the fact.

*I think it’s good I like to laugh at things. I find that’s actually a positive way to deal with them [uncivil incidents] (Bob)*

Another part of the aftermath was the doubt participants experienced over their own job competence. Participants described how the incident made them second-guess their own abilities on the job and how after the incident they tended to feel less confident in their job. Generally, participants who were newer employees experienced these thoughts. One participant described

how “horrible” she felt after a fellow nurse had submitted incident reports detailing the “errors” she had made while caring for a patient.

*Initially I thought “oh crap,” I’ve made all these errors...I was trusted with this patient and this assignment. I thought I handled it, but it turns out I didn’t at all. So, maybe I’m not as good of a nurse or as competent of a nurse as I thought I was* (Margaret)

In the aftermath of the uncivil incident, participants sought out other individuals. Some participants went to their supervisor either to seek advice on how to proceed or to get reassurance. Others “vented” to their spouse/partner or to colleagues at work. Seeking support from a spouse/partner versus a colleague was done for different purposes. Participants talked to their spouse/partner for the purpose of having someone to listen to them and support them unconditionally, while they talked to their colleagues in order to make sense of the incident, establish whether the perpetrator’s behaviour was normal, or for the purpose of discussing the incident with someone who had similar experiences.

*I think it’s nice to have both because your friend or your spouse, you always kind of expect them to support you. But when you have the support of the colleague as well, who is a bit closer and understands the narrative and the different views of it [the incident] better, it’s nice to have that* (Travis)

In response to not getting help from her perpetrator, one participant talked with other colleagues to understand whether the perpetrator’s behaviour was a “one-off” incident or if she [the perpetrator] was “always like that.”

*Maybe I’m missing something that I don’t know about it that is influencing things. Like I think I do go talk to other people about it to casually maybe test the waters to see what their interactions have been, to see if my interactions are different.* (Gigi)

Another coping strategy several participants mentioned was distracting and distancing themselves from what had just occurred. These participants described trying to clear their head, “*take a mental break*,” or distracting themselves with other work. Distraction often took the form of exercising (e.g., going to the gym).

*I'll try to go to the gym or go for a run or do something to just clear my head and sometimes if that doesn't work or I can't do that I'll leave wherever I am and go have a cup of tea and sit down and take a break, take a mental break and try to recoup.* (Sara)

One interviewee described how he used mindful meditation to “*help shut down my brain*”. Another interviewee said he uses work to forget what had just happened, but acknowledged that it wasn't a “*lasting solution*”.

Of the participants who recounted incivility incidents that were more on-going (i.e., not a single isolated event), a couple of the interviewees eventually went and sought counselling. For example, one participant had experienced recurring uncivil events over several years.

*I actually went to counselling. I just went to two sessions to try to help and get perspective on it because I needed to talk about it.* (Sandra)

As a result of the uncivil behaviour, some participants decided to quit and seek other employment opportunities.

*For me it was kind of the end. It was putting a period at the end of a very long situation. And also knowing that I have an exit strategy that I don't have to work with [perpetrator] again.* (Sandra)

This participant described being less bothered by the uncivil behaviour because they knew they had an exit strategy in place.



*I think he's intentionally excluded me from further communications because he doesn't see me as part of a team anymore, which I get. That's fine. (Sandra)*

Two strategies several participants talked about was perspective-taking and forward thinking. Perspective taking involved trying to avoid jumping to conclusion and instead wanting to understand why the perpetrator behaved the way he or she did, that is “*trying to look at their [perpetrator's] side.*” Participants explained how they often took a step back to avoid doing something rash and instead tried to think through an appropriate reaction. This usually coincided with them distancing themselves from the situation by going for a walk or by talking to other people to try to understand the context better.

*I was trying to look at his side, I was trying to look at my side; I was trying to plan a way forward to not have that situation happen again. (Sara)*

Forward thinking also captured a tendency of participants to avoid reacting immediately. For example, in the immediate aftermath of the event, one participant considered how to respond constructively, after his subordinate had yelled at him:

*Probably part of me would have wanted to come back after that comment was made to say something even sharper... but obviously that won't solve the situation and won't be constructive for the conversation so I didn't do that. (Timothy)*

Moreover, participants wanted to avoid reacting immediately if they knew they would have to continue working with this person in the future. Participants who did not have an exit strategy in place were more likely to try to act thoughtfully and more deliberately because they believed their behaviour could have implications for future relationships, not only with the perpetrator but also within the organization.

One participant discussed how he could have taken action in several ways to show his disagreement with the perpetrator's action. He worried however about how he would be perceived by others, and did not want to escalate matters or cause trouble for his organization.

*There are quite a few things you could do... I mean I just don't want to draw that kind of negative attention. In the long run, it does more damage than good because people don't want to be involved with you if they think you're kind of a loose cannon...* (Travis)

**Future Strategies.** Although participants tended to be at peace with their response to the situation, they also identified strategies they “vowed” to adopt in the future or “promises” they made to themselves in the event they experienced the behaviour again. When people were “caught off guard” by the perpetrator's behaviour, they often were too stunned to react. Other times, participants did not perceive they had a lot of job security at the time of the incident and therefore purposefully did not act in a confronting way, preferring to “fly under the radar” following the event.

How people chose to behave in the future at their workplace varied. When participants felt the behaviour had drawn attention to themselves, they believed that in the future they would “keep their head down” and not bring a lot of attention to themselves. Others who felt their job security was at risk or if they would be in a situation of “he said, she said” were adamant about keeping a “paper trail”. Participants described saving emails and ensuring all communication was in writing.

Other interviewees said they believed that in the future they would engage in more information seeking and confronting the perpetrator directly. This would include asking questions to understand why the perpetrator behaved uncivilly.

*I've learned to always ask...so if someone is rude to you, ask how they are doing because*

*maybe they are having a really bad day or maybe there is something going on in their life that is coming out... (Gigi)*

Overall, some participants expressed a desire to limit their interactions with their perpetrators. However, the majority said they would confront the perpetrator in the future or take more directive action to resolve the situation.

### **Changes in Relationships.**

***Burnt Bridges with the Perpetrator.*** After the uncivil incident, participants anticipated their future interactions with the perpetrator would be different. No participant felt their relationship with the perpetrator improved following the incident. Rather, they experienced a deterioration in the relationship that was accompanied by a loss of respect and a loss of trust toward the perpetrator. Many of the interviewees felt strong negative emotions toward the perpetrator, stating they “*hated*” him or her. Because of the perpetrator’s behaviour, interviewees felt in the future they would not “*jump*” to help the perpetrator if he/she needed anything or they would “*never ever*” do something to help. The perpetrator had “*burned bridges*” with the victim such that the victim was not willing to do something for them in the future. Some participants even noted that they would actively try to avoid interacting with the perpetrator.

*I would try and figure out when he would be in the office and would just go in there, do my work, and leave. I didn’t stay to make small talk. (Andrea)*

Conversations between participants and perpetrators were kept to a minimum, and interviewees were adamant that they did not want anything from the perpetrator and did not want to establish a personal relationship with them. Furthermore, interviewees felt “*on-guard*” around the perpetrator such that they were always “*treading carefully*” and being “*careful about what they say or do*”.

Although relationships with perpetrator worsened, a few interviewees noted that the experience helped foster stronger relationships with co-workers and colleagues. This was especially true when the interviewee was newer to the organization.

*If there is ever a silver lining, the good thing about the whole event is the relationships that have come out of it with the other people [colleagues]. I'm really thankful because I don't know that why would have happened so quickly if not for that [the uncivil incident].*  
(Elizabeth)

***The organization's response.*** How the organization was perceived to respond to the situation also changed participants' relationships with their organization. When the participant perceived the organization and/or leadership supported them, they viewed the organization positively. For instance, one participant stated that her organization “*looks after*” its employees and she felt really supported. The organization's support and care was a testament to her long tenure with the organization. This sentiment was echoed by other participants and in those cases when the participants felt supported by the organization, they treated the perpetrator's behaviour as an “*isolated event*” and did not change their views about the organization.

In most other cases, participants expressed disappointment with the organization's response (or lack thereof). One interviewee even said “*he hated the company.*” Participants discussed how a lack of response from the organization or leadership was a signal to the perpetrator that their behaviour was acceptable. Although some felt it was within the organization's reach to say or do something, there were others who said the organizations’ “*hands were tied*”. This occurred mostly in public sector or unionized jobs where because employees were so protected, there was not much disciplinary action to be taken.

Thus, changes in relationships represented a significant element in the incivility

experience. There was a negative shift in the relationship between the perpetrator and the participant such that participants did not want to build a relationship with the perpetrator. Participants focused their energy and time on building up relationships with other colleagues who supported them. The relationship between the participant and the organization also shifted. However, in cases where the organization had supported the participant, the change was positive.

In response to the research question, “*what influences employees to react or respond the way they do?*” it seems employees’ considerations for the future greatly impacted how they reacted. Contrary to the notion of incivility spirals, employees avoided escalating the incident. Instead, they chose the path of least resistance, preferring to avoid the perpetrator and focus on other relationships at work.

### **Vulnerability factors**

Important across all interviews was a discussion around participants’ vulnerability. Vulnerability in this context referred to unique features of the situation that made the situation particularly hurtful or severe. Below, I identify the two most prominent contextual features.

**Newcomer status.** The majority of participants recounted an incident that happened at the beginning of their tenure with the organization. Participants described feeling vulnerable in those first months either in the sense of figuring out work expectations, developing relationships with colleagues, getting a sense of how their department and organization worked, or establishing a good work reputation. A couple of participants described that if the situation had occurred later in their tenure, they would not have been so upset or bothered by it and would have attributed the behaviour to the perpetrator “*having a day*” or “*being silly*.”

**Pre-existing fears about job security and career trajectory.** One reason participants gave for why they were so upset over the uncivil incident is that they feared the implications it

might have on their job and career progression. Many participants expressed hope about receiving a promotion and thus were uneasy about confronting the perpetrator or reporting it through more formal means. They were afraid the incident might have negative implications for their tenure and growth in the organization. Interviewees who were not in a position of career growth or those who felt secure in their position were more likely to confront the perpetrator or seek more formal reporting strategies. For instance, a couple of participants who enjoyed more seniority in their organization had consulted with their HR department/union representative in an attempt to resolve the problem. Interviewees more junior in their career, although aware of more formal reporting strategies, did not tend to use them because they did not want to be seen in a bad light.

Overall, vulnerability factors emerged as an important element of participants lived experiences (see Table 3). These factors had great implications for how participants perceived the incident, and for how they responded. Participants who were newer to the organization and those aiming for a promotion found the uncivil behaviour upsetting and anxiety-provoking. These participants avoided reacting in ways that drew attention to themselves, instead seeking support from colleagues and spouses/partners.

Table 3

*Findings across Participants: Vulnerability Factors*

Participant	Newcomer	Job security fears
Lisa		✓
Sally		✓
Margaret	✓	✓
Jack		
Michael		
Travis		✓
Timothy	✓	
Bob		
Henry		

Gigi	✓	
Elizabeth	✓	✓
Sara	✓	
Andrea	✓	✓
Janelle		
Sandra		

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To aid in the visualization of an incivility experience, Figure 2 provides the main elements of Sara's incivility experience.

### Discussion

The purpose of Study 1 was to gain a phenomenological perspective on how employees experience workplace incivility. Below I re-visit my research questions to show how the interviews addressed each one and discuss limitations. Additional insight for future research and how the findings corroborate and extend current knowledge will be presented in the General Discussion.

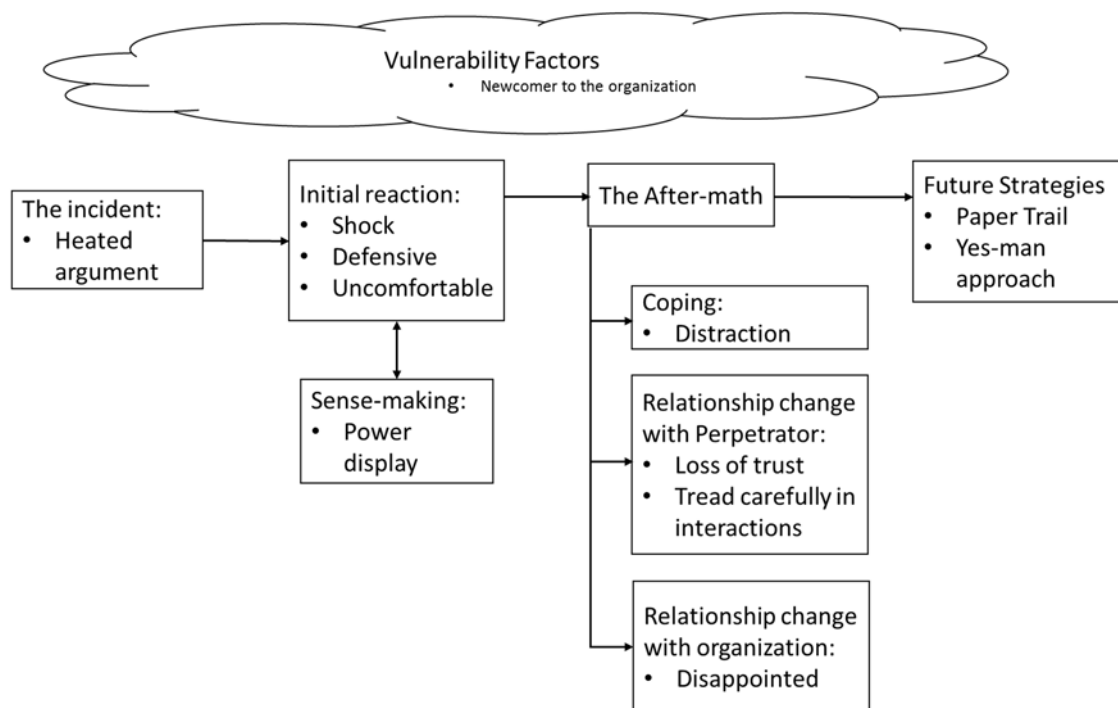


Figure 2. Visual representation of Sara's incivility experience

**Research Questions 1 & 2: How do employees make sense of an incivility experience? How do employees perceive intentionality?**

Sense-making emerged as a central element in the incivility experience. Throughout the story, participants were constantly providing context and reasons for why they thought the perpetrator behaved the way he/she did and why they [the participant] felt and behaved the way they did. Sense-making was also linked to how employees perceived intentionality. Many participants did indeed acknowledge that the situation made them more vulnerable to the uncivil behaviour. For example, because they were newer to the organization or up for a promotion, the incident was more upsetting or anxiety-provoking.

All participants experienced negative emotions following the uncivil event. The severity of the emotion however, varied, and it often depended on the situation or the attribution participants made. For example, when the participant was worried about their job security or tenure within the organization, the uncivil incident made them feel anxious (e.g., “*my anxiety spiked through the roof*” or “*I had fear...it made me really anxious*”) whereas for those who were not beholden to the organization or the job, although they experienced negative emotions, they were not as intense (e.g., “*frustrated*” or “*pissed*”). Another situational factor that contributed to perception of incivility was *when* the behaviour occurred. Being called into a meeting in the late afternoon on a Friday was perceived by Sally to be a way to threaten and intimidate her. This thus intensified the experience of negative emotion.

Two participants who engaged in perspective-taking seemed more understanding of the perpetrator’s behaviour – although they still maintained that it was disrespectful. These two participants were aware of hardships the perpetrator had endured or was enduring. This knowledge allowed the participants to realize the perpetrator was “*stressed*” or “*mad*” about



something else and they were “*taking it [stress] out on*” them. The intent behind these perpetrators’ actions was not perceived to be malicious or purposeful; participants were aware of extenuating circumstances that might have led to the behaviour. Other times however, the intent behind the perpetrator’s behaviour was seen as purposeful. Participants perceived that the perpetrator wanted to threaten, intimidate, or alienate them. In these cases, the perpetrator had some semblance of power either in their role, tenure, or age.

### **Research Question 3: How do people react or respond to incivility experiences?**

Participants reacted and responded in a number of ways to incivility. It ranged from completely distancing themselves from the organization by quitting or to confronting the perpetrator and trying to get them to listen to their [the participant’s] side of things. In rare cases, participants sought counselling. This occurred when their incivility experience was a recurring pattern of behaviour that spanned several months to years (discussed in greater detail below). Many participants wanted to avoid the perpetrator but also to avoid thinking about the incident; they would exercise, meditate, or work to try to “*shut their brain off.*”

A common response to incivility was to seek out others. Others included spouse/partner, colleagues, and/or a supervisor. For the most part, participants were cognizant of not reacting in a rash way, albeit many were too “*stunned*” to react immediately. Adopting a “*yes man approach*” and “*flying under the radar*” were strategies participants adopted to avoid further situations with the perpetrator. Others tried to seek out information to try to better understand the perpetrator’s actions. Participants also used the incident to inform their future behaviour towards and relationship with the perpetrator. Keeping paper trails, not engaging in conversation, and not helping the perpetrator are all examples of future strategies participants took or vowed to take.

### **Research Question 4: What influences employees to react or respond the way they do?**

Fear of repercussions was a major element in determining participants' reaction. Several of the participants recounted an incident when they were newer to the organization. Several feared that reporting the behaviour would jeopardize their tenure at the organization or limit or prevent their growth opportunities (i.e., promotions). None of the participants described engaging in retaliatory behaviour. Instead most expressed trying to get the perpetrator to understand their point of view. The extent to which they tried was influenced by how much they would have to interact with this person in the future. For those who had limited interaction with the perpetrator and could perform independently of the perpetrator, they opted for a distanced and avoidant relationship in the future, preferring to go to others when they needed help.

How much power the participant perceived him/herself to have influenced their response. In two cases, the participant was in a managerial role and the perpetrator was their subordinate. These participants sought more formal processes to try and resolve the issue and they reinforced the importance of having a dialogue and a constructive conversation. Other participants had spoken of more formal processes they could have taken, but had been hesitant either because they feared it would have negative implications for them, the process was too onerous, or they did not think anything would come of it.

Length of the incident (i.e., when the uncivil experience was not one isolated event) motivated two participants to seek counselling. One participant said her decision to seek counseling was motivated by her need to gain perspective on the incident. Eventually this participant sought employment elsewhere. The participants who exited the organization mostly did so because the incident had made them realize they were unsupported by management and the organization. In these cases, participants felt by not acting or saying anything, the organization had condoned the perpetrator's actions.

Experiencing workplace incivility involved a lot of sense-making, emotions, and changes for the victim. Post-experience, the victim would often resolve to do things differently in the future and redefine their relationships with the perpetrator, their colleagues, and their organization.

### **Limitations**

Participants recounted an incivility experience in one interview. Although participants generally described a single incident, many talked about how the incident had implications for how they would interact (or not interact) with the perpetrator in the future. Accordingly, the single interview limited my ability to fully understand how the relationship would change (in cases where the participant did not exit the organization), and if participants would follow through on the strategies they intended to take. Nevertheless, these future strategies emerged as an important element in the incivility experience.

The small sample size could be construed as a limitation such that I did not have enough data to arrive at meaningful conclusions. Data however was collected until I reached data saturation – that is until now new themes were emerging. Other phenomenological studies, have reached data saturation after interviewing six or seven individuals (e.g., Beck, 1992; Burton, 2000). Although my sample may be modest in size, participants ranged in age, sex, and tenure. Additionally, participants worked in a number of different industries and occupations. I was thus able to uncover elements of the incivility experience that were true across a range of different demographics and characteristics. These themes are generalizable and transferable across different occupations, roles, age groups, and gender.

Finally, data was obtained through self-report in a single in-depth interview whereby participants recollected a past incident. One could argue that since memory recall was

retrospective and subject to bias (Weick, 1995), the memories participants shared could be influenced by post hoc rationalization. Additionally, one reason why many participants might have said they would not have done anything differently is cognitive dissonance. They would prefer to believe they behaved in accordance with their values instead of experiencing any regrets for how they wished they had behaved. Despite these limitations, self-reported, in-depth interviews remains an appropriate way to tap participants' emotions and sense making as third parties (e.g., colleagues, supervisors, partner) would not be reliable judges (Dimburg, Andreasson, & Thunberg, 2011).

## **Conclusions**

The goal of Study 1 was to present a narrative description of the phases of the workplace incivility experience or elements of the phenomenon. Many of the findings complement previous quantitative research. For instance, the behaviours described align with items on the Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina et al., 2001). Participants all described experiencing negative emotions after the incident. Moreover, the current study offered a whole examination of an employee's incivility experience rather than an investigation of a snapshot of it (i.e., consequences of incivility or antecedents). Doing so allowed me to understand the contextual factors surrounding an uncivil incident that impacted employees' cognitions, feelings, and behaviours.

The study uncovered elements of the incivility experience that could be applied to more quantitative studies. For instance, many participants reported on how they coped with incivility and why they chose those options. Several participants engaged in strategies that took their mind off of the event (e.g., working on other tasks, going for a walk, having a cup of tea...). One participant reported doing mindful meditation. This suggests that individuals try to re-focus their attention and further suggests that people who have been exposed to uncivil events might benefit

from mindfulness. Mindfulness shifts attention away from the past and the future, and focuses it on the present (Rau & Williams, 2016). Indeed, having a more mindful disposition would be useful as many participants tended to think about the impact that the behaviour will have on their future within the organization or even others' perception of them.

As such, Study Two explored the buffering role of dispositional mindfulness in the relationship between incivility and negative outcomes. Specifically, I explored if more mindful individuals experience less negative affect, rumination, and stress after being treated rudely and if they would be more likely to forgive their perpetrator. If individuals with a general tendency to be mindful experience better outcomes following an uncivil experience than others, then these results may have important implications for organizations and individuals in terms of promoting mindfulness and investing in mindfulness training.

### CHAPTER THREE: Study Two

One of the major outcomes of workplace incivility is decreased well-being. Employees repeatedly report lower job satisfaction, increased stress, and higher levels of burnout after being exposed to rude and discourteous behaviour (e.g., Cortina et al., 2001; Lim & Teo, 2009; Miner, Pesonen, Smittick, Sigel, and Clark, 2014). Theoretically, the negative outcomes associated with incivility are most frequently understood through resource-based theories (e.g., conservation of resource theory [Hobfoll, 1989]; job demands-resource model [Demerouti et al., 2001]). Briefly, incivility is considered a demand or job stressor that depletes employees' resources and ultimately results in strain which can take the form of increased distress, drained energy and overall impaired cognitive, emotional, and physiological functioning. A worthwhile endeavor is to look for ways to mitigate the effects of strain.

Accordingly, the first objective of Study Two was to investigate the boundary conditions of workplace incivility that can potentially protect people against negative incivility outcomes. Empirical work has already documented the moderating role of narcissism (Meier & Semmer, 2012), social support (Miner et al. 2012), motherhood (Miner et al., 2014), and resiliency (Laschinger, et al., 2013). Within the framework of Conservation of Resources Theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989) and other resource-based models, moderators serve as buffers against or facilitators to negative workplace incivility outcomes like stress. The current study explored the moderating role of dispositional mindfulness, and examined whether it could act as a buffer to reduce negative affect, rumination, and stress. As will be discussed, not only does mindfulness promote well-being, but it is also trainable, something which organizations can capitalize on.

The second objective of Study Two was to investigate the often overlooked variable of forgiveness. Rather than examine negative reactions to workplace incivility, I considered how we

might promote positive responses such as forgiveness. In the mistreatment literature, we often focus on negative consequences such as spirals, retaliation, and/or revenge. Recent calls have been made to consider other potential outcomes like forgiveness or reconciliation (e.g., Hershcovis & Cameron, 2011; Long & Christian, 2015).

The third objective of my study was to measure incivility using the WIS and the PVM to more appropriately study incivility through a reflective lens. As described by Hershcovis and Reich (2013), current mistreatment measures are mostly formative (although they are measured as if they were reflective constructs). Measures such as the WIS, are problematic in that they assume perceptions, intent, and severity of mistreatment when they really only measure the frequency of a range of behaviour. By using reflective measures, researchers are better equipped to investigate the overall mistreatment experience and how the employee perceived the situation. Measuring workplace incivility using both the WIS and the PVM will offer preliminary insight on the differences and/or similarities of findings and its implications.

Below, I first provide a theoretical framework for the moderating role of mindfulness and how it can potentially buffer against negative incivility outcomes. Following, I outline what mindfulness is and recent empirical work around mindfulness relationships in an effort to show how it can mitigate rumination, negative affect, and stress following an uncivil experience. Next, I discuss how mindfulness can also promote forgiveness, a positive response to workplace incivility. Finally, I attempt to show how reflective measures can possibly enhance our current methods for investigating incivility.

### **Theoretical Background**

A crucial facet to resource-based theories is the importance of gaining resources and/or removing stressors. As such, research has explored several moderating variables that can

mitigate or buffer the effects of workplace incivility. Moderators (e.g., resiliency, social support) serve a protective function for individuals experiencing incivility at work, which then allow them to effectively cope with incivility. In other words, they offer employees the energy, tools, or conditions that help protect against resource loss and distress. For instance, social support offers employees comfort and encouragement from either friends or co-workers, thereby signaling to them that they are cared for and valued. It is likely that there are other moderators that can reduce the impact of incivility, and scholars have repeatedly urged researchers to continue investigating these boundary conditions. One moderator which could reduce negative incivility outcomes is mindfulness. Indeed, Chen et al. (2013) suggested mindfulness as one way in which the effects of incivility could be mitigated. As such, this dissertation investigates whether or not mindfulness can mitigate negative responses to workplace incivility and promote positive responses.

One reason why workplace incivility is particularly stressful is because of the increased cognitive rumination that accompanies it (Park, Fritz, & Jex, 2015). Especially since a characterizing feature of this phenomenon is ambiguous intent, the target is left wondering what the instigator's intentions were, how s/he should react, or whether s/he should inform anyone. Additionally, affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) suggests that being the target of rude behaviour automatically elicits negative affect as individuals may experience humiliation and embarrassment (Ghosh et al., 2011; Lim et al., 2008). COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) suggests that these rude interactions, coupled with employees' work demands, can be very draining on an employee's resources. The continued rumination about the incivility experience and the negative affect evoked may add to employee's distress. Experiencing incivility might signal to the employee a loss of valued resource like social belonging,



competence, perhaps even job security. The potential loss of these valued resources would indicate increased feelings of stress and reduced well-being.

Accordingly, one way in which employees could mitigate the effects of workplace incivility is by decreasing rumination about the uncivil event or refraining from experiencing negative affect. One promising avenue of research which helps decrease ruminations is mindfulness. Below I begin with an introduction of mindfulness, followed by an explanation of how mindfulness can potentially buffer the negative effects of workplace incivility.

### **What is Mindfulness?**

Several definitions and conceptualizations of mindfulness have been put forward. Mindfulness is usually defined as the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 822). It has roots in Buddhist traditions as well as many other contemplative traditions like Theravada and Zen (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In varying degrees, these ancient traditions all emphasize the importance of awareness for enhancing and maintaining human well-being. As such, these practices aim to cultivate and enhance our universal capacity to be attentive and aware. Davis and Hayes (2011) define it as moment-to-moment awareness without judgment. To further this definition, Bishop et al. (2004, as cited in Shaprio, Astin, Bishop, & Cordova, 2005) stated that “mindfulness has been conceptualized as a state in which one is highly aware of the present moment, acknowledging and accepting it, without getting caught up in thought about the present experience or in emotional reactions to it” (p. 168). Based on the definitions given above, one can infer that being mindful involves paying attention to present experiences in a non-judgmental and non-evaluative way.

**Dispositional Mindfulness.** Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, and Tony (2006) adopted a dispositional view of mindfulness. These researchers argue that there are five components of mindfulness: observing, describing, non-judging of inner experiences, acting with awareness, and non-reactivity. Below, I provide a definition of each facet.

*Observing* refers to focusing attention and attending to external and internal experiences as they come. *Describing* refers to individuals' ability to label these experiences (e.g., worry, anger, and hunger). Recognizing these emotions, but not evaluating or attaching any value to them is *non-judgment* of inner experience. Individuals high in non-judgment do not blame themselves for having negative emotions or cognitions. *Acting with awareness* refers to being attentive and aware of the present moment. This component of mindfulness reduces individuals' worries about the past and their anxieties about the future and to accept whatever is occurring in the present moment (Jacobs & Blustein, 2008). Finally, *non-reactivity* refers to the passing of thoughts and emotions without being consumed by them or fighting against them. When people have anxious thoughts or are prone to ruminate and replay past incidents, mindfulness can help them take a step back and focus their attention on the present moment. As such, individuals who score high on non-reactivity are less prone to experiencing negative outcomes (Ciesla, Reilly, Dickson, Emanuel, & Updegraff, 2014).

In contrast to mindlessness, where individuals rush through experiences without noting any sensory information that may arise, dispositional mindfulness entails observing (without judgment) external or internal stimuli as they occur (Baer, 2003, p. 125). Mindful individuals attend to stimuli and recognize them, but they refrain from evaluating them as "good or bad, true or false, health or sick, important or trivial" (Marlatt & Kristeller, 1999, as cited in Baer, 2003, p. 125). For example, a mindful individual would recognize there is heavy traffic, but not evaluate

it as negative or get caught up thinking what traffic might be like had they taken a different route (Glomb, Duffy, Bono, & Yang, 2011). Indeed, recent studies have shown the wide reaching positive effects of mindfulness (e.g., leadership effectiveness, positive affect, well-being, etc.), which reinforces the idea that mindfulness may also be one way to buffer the negative effects of workplace incivility.

Mindfulness can help individuals become better at self-control both behaviourally and cognitively. Rather than respond to incivility with more incivility or escalating aggressive behaviour, employees who are mindful can choose to respond non-aggressively or choose to exercise non-reactivity to one's incivility experience which could then foster more reflective and adaptive responses (Peters, Eisenlohr-Moul, & Smart, 2015). When opting for these responses individuals may feel less upset or distressed about how they were treated because they would have learned to dwell less on these kinds of negative incidents. The decrease in distress and rumination will then be more likely to increase work productivity, and more importantly, employees' well-being. Next, I review the behavioural and cognitive processes that underscore mindfulness, and elaborate on psychological mechanics of mindfulness.

### **How does Mindfulness Work?**

Mindfulness allows individuals to let go of ruminations about the past or fears regarding the future and to cultivate healthier and more adaptive ways of functioning. The ability to disengage from automatic thoughts and unhealthy behaviour patterns can foster self-endorsed behavioural regulation which is then associated with well-being and enhancement (Baer et al. 2006; Brown & Ryan, 2003). This is especially relevant when individuals have negative experiences as it might help alleviate feelings of stress.

As mentioned, stress is a key negative outcome of workplace incivility. Learning to become more mindful can help individuals reduce stress. Ciesla et al. (2014) described how mindfulness operates through the components of non-reactivity, non-judgment, and acting with awareness to predict positive outcomes (e.g., reduced stress). When individuals accept that stress is a part of their life and do not dwell on it, they can experience it without the need to self-blame or brood. Similarly, Baer et al. (2006) and Ives-Deliperi, Solms, and Meinjtes (2014) explained how mindfulness can reduce cognitive vulnerability to stress and negative affect.

Mindful individuals are also able to recognize upsetting experiences as passing events without judging or attributing subjective importance to them in a process known as disidentification. Individuals learn to disidentify or decenter their perception of internal events (i.e., thoughts and emotions). This means that emotions and/or cognitions are not taken in as an immediate reality and absorbed into attention and acted on, but rather they are viewed as events passing through the mind (Michel, Bosch, & Rexroth, 2014). Through this awareness, individuals are able to respond with less emotional reactivity and are better equipped to regulate their emotions, ultimately alleviating symptoms of anxiety to help achieve positive outcomes.

In fact, Ives-Deliperi et al. (2014) provided neurological support for signal changes in regions of the brain associated with emotional regulation. Participants were 10 right-handed individuals who had participated in a mindfulness intervention and had practiced daily mindfulness meditation for at least four years. Their brain activity was examined during mindfulness meditation and during a control task. Compared to a control task, results of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) showed decreases in midline cortical structure activity during mindfulness meditation. Ives-Deliperi et al. concluded that practicing mindfulness can have a “quieting” effect on brain regions associated with subjective and cognitive appraisal

of emotions. The quieting effect would reflect the disidentification phenomenon described previously as a central component of mindfulness. Individuals become empathetic observers whereby they refrain from automated reactions and do not identify themselves with the person or event they are observing. As such, events and thoughts are registered and labeled without judgment or dwelling, and individuals experience these [events and thoughts] as transitory events that are separate from the self (p. 232).

Theories of self-regulation also help to highlight the role of mindfulness in well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003). According to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), one needs to be attentive and aware to maintain and enhance elements of psychological and behavioural functioning. Awareness is a valuable quality when making choices that are consistent with one's needs, values, and interests. Whereas automatic or controlled processing may limit one's ability to make choices that are consistent with needs and values, mindfulness promotes awareness thus directing attention to basic needs. In this way, individuals are more likely to regulate their behaviour to act in ways that would help them achieve and fulfill needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 824).

Other ways in which mindfulness promotes enhanced well-being was through regulating thoughts. Blecharz et al. (2014) discussed how being mindful can alter perceptions of barriers and improve individuals' sense of control over oneself and the environment. Because mindful individuals do not attach value to passing events and accept those experiences without judgment, they perceive barriers as less relevant or bothering. They have high self-control and use positive self-talk to maintain high levels of positive affect, cognitions, and behaviour.

Studies have also provided evidence for the physiological changes associated with mindfulness. In a randomized controlled study with a sample of 41 employees, Davidson et al. (2003) looked at neuroimaging using fMRI, and showed that participants who had participated in a mindfulness intervention exhibited greater left side activation in the anterior cortical area. The left side activation in the anterior regions is known to be associated with positive affect expression, heightened attention, and emotional self-regulation. As such, mindfulness training can lead to brain changes consistent with more effective handling of negative affect. Furthermore, these changes were observed post-intervention and even four months later.

In sum, mindfulness works through improved self-regulation. Individuals experience an increase in regulation over thoughts, emotions, and behaviour after an adverse event. The next section will highlight the empirical work showing that mindfulness is related to positive psychological and physical outcomes. One feature of mindfulness research that has recently received attention is the study of dispositional mindfulness, and how looking at mindfulness facets helps improve the prediction of outcomes. I draw on research that shows how specific facets of mindfulness, namely non-judging, acting with awareness, and non-reactivity, contribute to the prediction of outcomes (e.g., ) more so than the facets of observing and describing.

### **Building the Case for Dispositional Mindfulness: Evidence for its Benefits**

Pepping, O'Donovan, and Davis (2013) investigated the relationship between both mindfulness disposition and a brief mindfulness training and self-esteem. In their first study, the authors investigated the relationship between each of the five facets of mindfulness (i.e., observing, describing, non-judging, non-reactivity, and acting with awareness) and self-esteem. They expected that the mindfulness facets of describing, non-judging, non-reactivity, and acting with awareness would be positively related to self-esteem. They noted that mindful

people are less consumed by thoughts and emotions that characterize low self-esteem (i.e., harsh, critical, and judgmental thoughts about the self, p. 378). Thus, they are able to notice experiences and events without becoming consumed, overwhelmed, or caught up in self-critical thought or emotions. Mindful people are also able to observe difficult thoughts impartially rather than evaluate them as good or bad. In this way, they are less likely to be overly critical of themselves. Non-reactivity for instance, allows for thoughts and emotions to enter and leave awareness without ruminating on them or fighting against them. Once again, individuals will not be consumed by self-critical thoughts or engage in counterproductive behaviours in response to those thoughts. This process, as noted, is referred to as disidentification.

Disidentification occurs when self-critical thoughts are simply treated as thoughts and not a true reflection of reality. Moreover, when individuals are able to act with awareness, they are less likely to become distracted or consumed with negative thoughts. Pepping et al. (2013) did not predict a relationship between the fifth facet of mindfulness, observation, and self-esteem. They note that while observing might yield adaptive and balanced self-insight, it could be that the relationship with self-esteem is contingent on the stance individuals take to the experience, such as being non-judgmental and non-reactive. As expected, results of Pepping et al.'s online survey showed that the four facets of dispositional mindfulness (describing, non-judging, non-reactivity, and acting with awareness) were significantly positively related to self-esteem and the mindfulness facet of non-judging was the strongest predictor. The only mindfulness facet that was not significantly related to self-esteem was observing.

In a second study, Pepping et al. used an experimental design to investigate whether a brief mindfulness meditation that focused on breathing would increase self-esteem. As expected, self-esteem increased in the experimental condition but not in the control. This study not only

provides evidence for the relationship between both mindfulness and self-esteem, but it is also one of the few studies to examine the independent prediction of each the mindfulness facets. The study of workplace incivility would also benefit from examining the moderating role of mindfulness, specifically examining the *independent* contribution of each of the mindfulness facets on outcomes.

In another study that looked at the independent contribution of mindfulness facets, Ciesla et al. (2014) explored whether dispositional mindfulness (specifically the facets of non-reactivity, non-judgment, and acting with awareness) moderated the effects of stress on sadness among adolescents over a seven-day period. Less mindful individuals might find it difficult to accept stress as a natural part of life, and would be more likely to dwell or brood. As such, those with lower levels of mindfulness would be likely to have a stronger relation between stress and sadness.

In support of their hypotheses, Ciesla et al. (2014) reported that the mindfulness facets of non-reactivity and non-judgment buffered the effects of stress. At higher levels of these mindfulness facets, daily stress did not predict changes in sadness. One proposed mechanism through which the benefits of mindfulness are experienced is through reductions in rumination. When you ruminate over events, it signifies less acceptance and more negative affect, and mindfulness directly targets both of these processes. As such, Ciesla et al. concluded that individuals who respond to stressful experiences in an accepting and non-judgmental way and who let negative experiences pass without reacting to them are less likely to experience higher levels of negative affect.

Similar to Ciesla et al. (2014), Peters et al. (in press) investigated different dimensions of mindfulness. Specifically, the authors looked at the relationship between different dimensions of



mindfulness and rejection sensitivity (i.e., heightened fear of potential social rejection and increased reactivity to it). Following the same line of reasoning as previous studies, the authors predicted that four out of the five mindfulness dimensions (i.e., non-judging, non-reactivity, acting with awareness, and describing) would all be negatively related to rejection sensitivity and that non-judging would moderate the relationship between rejection sensitivity and negative affect. Being mindful prompts individuals to be less absorbed in negative thought and more thoughtful in their reactions which would allow them to ‘get over’ rejection quicker and not have lasting impact on mood (p. 2). In line with their predictions, the four facets of mindfulness were negatively associated with rejection sensitivity, and the strongest association was between non-judging and rejection sensitivity. This suggests that a non-judgmental approach allows individuals to experience thoughts and feelings related to rejection without becoming overly consumed with self-critical thoughts about the experience. Peters et al. also showed that non-judging moderated the relationship between rejection sensitivity and negative affect such that when individuals were high in non-judging, no significant relationship was observed between rejection sensitivity and negative affect. This again demonstrated that a non-judgmental approach enables individuals to accept the experience of rejection without seeing it as reflection on themselves and this helps prompt speedier recovery and decreased negative mood. Higher levels of non-judgment can be protective factor against the negative emotional consequences of sensitivity to social rejection or failure.

### **Mindfulness in the Workplace**

There are a growing number of studies investigating the potential for mindfulness at work. Studies have explored a wide array of benefits including stress reduction (Manotas, Segura, Eraso, Oggins, & McGovern, 2014), leadership well-being (Roche, Haar, & Luthans,

2014) and emotional exhaustion (Hulsheger, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013). The following section will discuss studies assessing both dispositional mindfulness and how mindfulness training can increase mindfulness in workplace contexts.

The majority of studies looking at mindfulness in the workplace have explored how mindfulness may reduce stress. Mindful individuals are able to sustain attention of their moment-to-moment experiences in a way that is based on observation rather than evaluation. Because they are not evaluating, they are more likely to gather accurate perceptions of their internal and external environment. Ultimately, this will lead to individuals gaining a greater sense of control over their actions, reduced automatic reactivity, and more effective coping behaviour (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004) thereby reducing their perception of stress. As per COR theory, mindfulness functions as a resource enabling people to either not view events as stressful or to find ways to manage those perceptions effectively. Accordingly, individuals will be better able to manage stress since they would have enhanced emotional processing and coping strategies.

In an investigation of mindfulness and leaders' well-being, Roche et al. (2014) measured dispositional mindfulness and a number of outcome variables among four samples of leaders (CEOs, middle and junior managers, and entrepreneurs). They found that mindfulness was negatively related to anxiety, depression, negative affect, and burnout. Roche et al. discussed how mindfulness works through a process of de-identification. Mindful individuals do not personalize events; they simply notice them. By doing so, automatic mental process decreases which results in decreased rumination and greater affective and behavioural regulation. Individuals are able to make deliberate choices in response to situations as opposed to reacting reflexively.

Studies have also explored the benefits of mindfulness beyond well-being and stress reduction. Using survey data from 68 employees across six different organizations, Leroy, Anseel, Dimitrova, and Sels (2014) studied whether mindfulness and work engagement were related. They found that mindfulness was related to work engagement and the relationship was mediated by authentic functioning, which was defined as “being aware of one’s self and regulating oneself accordingly” (p. 240). In line with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), individuals are more engaged when they participate in activities that intrinsically motivate them. In other words, mindfulness helps individuals become aware of activities that are aligned with their needs and values. This awareness is done in a way that is non-judging which in addition to enhancing self-awareness, also enhances self-acceptance and self-regulation. Thus, individuals actively chose to engage or participate in work activities that will fulfill self-determined needs.

Other areas in which mindfulness has been shown to have beneficial outcomes in the workplace are in work-life balance promotion and emotional and attentional control. Employees can use mindfulness strategies to segment or create boundaries between work and non-work life domains. Often people experience strain because they are pre-occupied with work-related thoughts and feelings during non-work time or vice versa (Carlson & Frone, 2003). Practicing mindfulness may enable employees to experience psychological detachment from work while at home, because they will be in the present moment without worrying about the past or being anxious about the future. Self-report data from a pre- and post-intervention assessments showed that a three-week mindfulness training program promoted work-life balance (Michel et al., 2014). Participants in the intervention group reported being better able to psychologically detach from work than the wait-list control group. The intervention group also reported less strain-based

work-family conflict and was more satisfied with their own work life balance. These effects were observed right after the intervention and at follow-up two weeks later. As such, mindfulness can be employed as a cognitive-emotional segmentations strategy to promote work-life balance.

Vega et al. (2014) examined the effects of mindfulness training on emotional and attentional measures in a sample of interning students. Results demonstrated that mindfulness training significantly improved measures of trait anger and attentional control in the intervention group. Specifically, participants in the intervention group were less likely to be angry and had fewer errors on a performance task. These results are especially promising in the context of mistreatment at work. If employees are less prone to automatic reactions and angry responses, they will have more thoughtful and empathic responses to experiences of mistreatment at work. Mindfulness seems to hold potential for mitigating negative responses in the context of mistreatment at work, specifically workplace incivility.

### **Mindfulness and Mistreatment at Work: The Case of Incivility**

To my knowledge no studies have looked at the relation between mindfulness and incivility. The closest investigation of mindfulness and mistreatment would be the studies of Long and Christian (2015) who investigated the role of mindfulness in the context of injustice at work. Long and Christian conducted two studies that explored the moderating role of mindfulness in the relationship between injustice and responses to injustice. In the first study, undergraduate students were given a difficult proofreading task after which they listened to a pre-recorded mindful or mind-wandering audio clip. A supervisor then gave participants either fair or unfair feedback. Participants were left to sit for two minutes to experience any ruminative thoughts or negative affect. At the end of the experiment participants were asked to evaluate the supervisor. In both conditions, the supervisor then requested they not take the expensive looking

pen, which had been promised to them at the beginning of the experiment. Presumably if participants felt they had been treated unfairly they would be more likely to evaluate the supervisor negatively and more likely to take the pen. This tendency, however, should be mitigated if participants had received mindfulness training.

As expected, mindfulness did moderate the relationship between unjust feedback and negative outcomes. Those who heard a mind-wandering clip ruminated more and were more likely to steal the pen and report increased rumination and negative affect. On the other hand, participants who listened to a mindfulness clip, reported lower levels of rumination and negative affect. They were also less likely to engage in retribution (i.e., theft and/or negative performance appraisal).

In the second study, Long and Christian (2015) collected survey data from employed individuals. They found that lower dispositional mindfulness was associated with higher rumination in response to unfair treatment at work. Additionally, lower dispositional mindfulness was related to increased anger. Applied to the context of incivility, experiencing rude behaviour at work also evokes negative feelings and rumination. As such, it is possible that mindfulness can also mitigate the negative effect of workplace incivility.

### **The Current Study**

Long and Christian's (2015) second study provided evidence that dispositional mindfulness at work is likely to have positive effects on self-regulation and impact reactions to workplace incivility. Long and Christian however did not measure mindfulness using a facet-approach. As such, the proposed study will investigate the relationship between relevant facets of the five factor model of dispositional mindfulness (i.e., observing, describing, non-judging, non-reactivity, and acting with awareness), and workplace incivility. Mindfulness may be especially

relevant to workplace incivility because mindfulness works through reducing rumination and negative affect, two likely outcomes of experiencing incivility.

Mindfulness is a regulatory process that operates through two mechanisms: decoupling the self from the experience and decreased automaticity. First, when individuals are able to decouple the self from the experience, they learn not to take events or statements personally. When an employee experiences incivility, decoupling would allow him or her to separate the ego from the experience. In turn, the employee would refrain from inferring self-relevance meaning that he or she would experience incivility without associating it with self-worth. Thus, mindfulness can allow employees to perceive a broader range of appropriate and autonomously regulated responses (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007a, 2007b; Glomb et al., 2011; Long & Christian, 2015). Second, mindfulness enhances decreased automaticity. After experiencing an uncivil interaction, the tendency to respond and react quickly would diminish. As such, mindful individuals may be less inclined to respond with more incivility or aggression (Long & Christian, 2015). Mindfulness may help employees buffer or manage responses to workplace incivility. Not all facets of mindfulness however will be relevant to the experience of incivility and the prediction of outcomes. As expanded on below, the facets of non-judging, acting with awareness, and non-reactivity will moderate the negative relationship between incivility and outcomes as these facets impact how individuals experience affect and regulate thought processes.

The current study expands on the mistreatment and mindfulness literature in three ways. First, I studied the relationship between mindfulness and incivility using a multi-dimensional approach to mindfulness, second by measuring incivility using the WIS and the PVM, and third by investigating an often-forgotten response to incivility – forgiveness.

**Rumination and Negative Affect**

As mentioned previously, one reason why workplace incivility is particularly stressful is because of the increased rumination and negative affect that accompanies it (Park et al., 2015). Mindfulness, however, can help mitigate the negative effects of incivility via reductions in ruminations and negative affect. Individuals who are mindful are less pre-occupied with past events, and even when faced with negative workplace experiences like incivility, they can recognize that being the victim is not a true representation of self or reality. They view the experience more objectively, rather than as an attack or judgment on who they are. Mindful individuals are less likely to ruminate and get caught up in repetitive and automatic cognitions associated with negative events (Borders, Earleywine, & Jajodia, 2010). As such, mindfulness likely works in opposition to rumination as the former shifts individual's focus from the past and directs attention to the present moment.

**A Multidimensional Approach: Acting with Awareness, Non-Judging, and Non-Reactivity**

Most studies investigating the relationship between mindfulness in the context of the workplace have not taken a multidimensional approach to mindfulness. To do so is important as previous studies have shown differential relationships between mindfulness facets and outcomes (e.g., Ciesla et al., 2014; Peters et al., in press). As such, this dissertation explores the moderating role of three mindfulness facets on the relationship between workplace incivility. Specifically, I expect that the mindfulness facets of acting with awareness, non-judging of inner experience, and non-reactivity to experience will mitigate the negative incivility outcomes, namely negative affect, rumination, and stress. This is because negative affect, rumination, and stress mostly stem from maladaptive evaluative reactions. Individuals are unable to re-focus their negative thoughts and feelings and are likely to brood and get caught up in a negative cycle of thought. The

reasoning presented suggests that the mindfulness facets of acting with awareness, non-judging, and non-reactivity are most relevant to the discussion of workplace incivility and its outcomes, more so than the facets of observing and describing.

The observing and describing facets of mindfulness may be less relevant in the context of workplace incivility in that even though individuals are able to observe either external or internal stimuli and label them, individuals observe and describe them in positive *and* negative way (Baer et al., 2008). The other facets of mindfulness however, focus more on how to attend to stimuli in an accepting way. In this sense, the facets of acting with awareness, non-judging, and non-reactivity are helpful in getting individuals to “accept an experience” (Baer et al. 2006, p. 42) by not engaging in self-doubt, inferring self-relevance, nor reacting immediately to the situation. Individuals who can evaluate a workplace incivility incident in a non-judgmental way are less likely to brood or ruminate over the event. Similarly, individuals who are non-reactive are less likely to engage in maladaptive responses (e.g., retaliation) and could opt for more adaptive strategies, like forgiveness. Finally, acting with awareness might buffer against rumination by allowing individuals to remain present-focused (Peters et al., in press). These mindfulness facets function as resources that can help employees manage negative experiences, resulting in increased well-being. As such, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 1.** The mindfulness facets of (a) non-reactivity, (b) non-judging, and (c) acting with awareness will moderate the positive relationship between workplace incivility and *rumination* such that the relationship will be weaker for people high in mindfulness.

**Hypothesis 2.** The mindfulness facets of (a) non-reactivity, (b) non-judging, and (c) acting with awareness will moderate the positive relationship between workplace incivility and *negative affect* such that the relationship will be weaker for people high in mindfulness.



**Hypothesis 3.** The mindfulness facets of (a) non-reactivity, (b) non-judging, and (c) acting with awareness will moderate the positive relationship between workplace incivility and *stress* such that the relationship will be weaker for people high in mindfulness.

**Hypothesis 4.** The mindfulness facets of (a) non-reactivity, (b) non-judging, and (c) acting with awareness will moderate the indirect effect of incivility on stress through rumination such that the indirect effects are weaker (stronger) when mindfulness is higher (weaker).

**Hypothesis 5.** The mindfulness facets of (a) non-reactivity, (b) non-judging, and (c) acting with awareness will moderate the indirect effect of incivility on stress through negative affect such that the indirect effects are weaker (stronger) when mindfulness is higher (weaker).

Figure 3 presents the full hypothesized model.

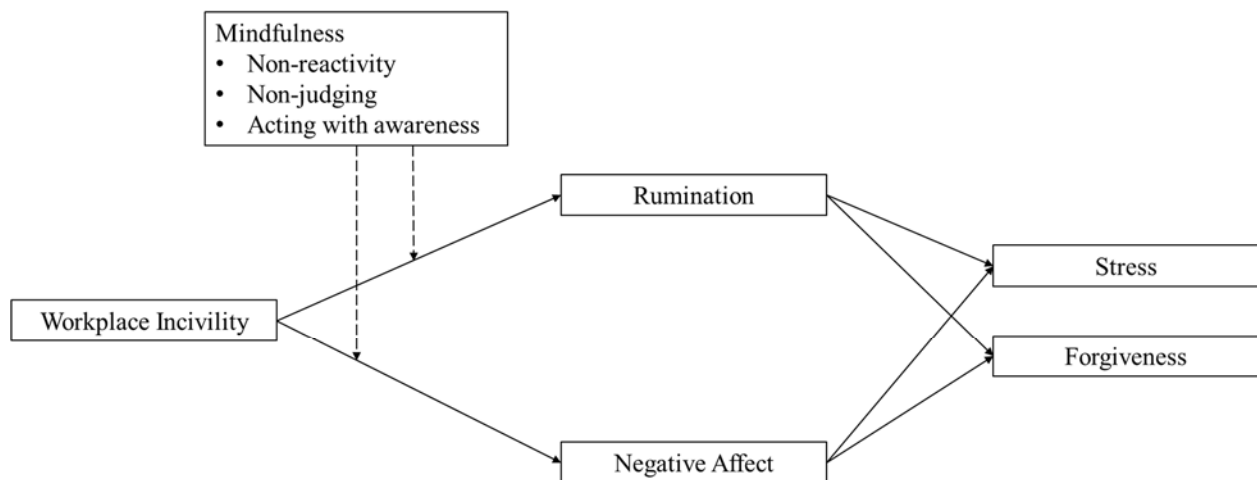


Figure 3. Hypothesized Model (Adapted from Long & Christian, 2015)

### A Moderated Mediation Model of Mindfulness and Forgiveness

One limitation to Long and Christian's (2015) study is that they only examined one possible response to injustice – retaliation. As mentioned previously, there are many ways individuals can respond to mistreatment. Most reactions investigated so far have been in

the form of retaliation and revenge or passive methods such as ignoring or avoiding (Cortina & Magley, 2009). However, arguably, the most positive outcome would be forgiving the transgressor. Yet the process of forgiving the instigator has received little empirical attention. In other words, since mindfulness has been shown mitigate negative employee reactions and behaviours, can it also promote positive psychological processes and behaviours following instances of incivility? Therefore, this research investigates the incivility-forgiveness link, and asks whether mindfulness can promote forgiveness via reductions in ruminations and negative affect.

Forgiveness, as defined by McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen (2000), is an “intra-individual, prosocial change toward a perceived transgressor” (p. 9). Within this definition, there has been a perception of wrong-doing, regardless of whether a transgression (i.e., uncivil behaviour) has occurred. One can also infer that when people chose to forgive their offender, their attitudes become less negative and more positive.

**Process of Forgiveness.** At the cognitive level, forgiveness involves the reduction or cessation of ruminations about the incident. Forgiving entails the victim’s attempt to reinterpret the offense episode and actions of the offender (Aquino, Grover, Goldman, & Folger, 2003). An individual might also change the attributions he or she previously made about the offender. In the case of workplace incivility, a victim might choose to forgive the perpetrator by reinterpreting their (the perpetrator’s) behaviour from an intentional transgression to an unintentional slight or by providing situational attributions for the perpetrator’s behaviour. Mindfulness might promote forgiveness through components such as non-reactivity and non-judgment. After an uncivil encounter, thoughts and affect about the experience can enter and leave awareness without the victim ruminating over them, thereby increasing the likelihood of forgiveness.

At the affective level, forgiveness involves the victim replacing his or her negative affect with positive or neutral ones (Aquino et al., 2003; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Solvik, & Lipkus, 1991). While victims of incivility tend to harbor negative affect towards their instigator, mindfulness can help with the down-regulation of negative affect (Glomb et al. 2011; Long & Christian, 2015; Wright, Day, & Howells, 2009) and the up-regulation of positive affects (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008; Giluk, 2009). The change from negative to positive affect could lead to greater understanding, empathy, or even benevolence. Ultimately, after an uncivil encounter, mindfulness would prompt employees to engage in more thoughtful and empathetic responses like forgiveness.

At the behavioural level, forgiveness involves the victim not doing any harm to the offender. This includes forgoing acts of revenge against the offender (Aquino, Trip, & Bies, 2006). In other words, the victim makes no effort to harm, inflict damage on, or punish the party responsible. As seen from the discussion on the outcomes associated with workplace incivility, employees typically spend time worrying about the incident, how to deal with it, and how to avoid future interactions with the instigator. These outcomes harm the organization by affecting the well-being of its employees and consequently the bottom line. Since incivility can spiral into more aggressive behaviour, such as revenge, there can be enormous costs to both the victim and the organization, which is why mindfulness may be a valuable resource not only in mitigating retaliatory responses to mistreatment (e.g., Long & Christian, 2015), but in promoting more positive behaviour like forgiveness.

**Benefits of Forgiveness.** One reason why forgiveness may be beneficial is that it can restore individual well-being. Experiencing workplace incivility is a stressful event. Similarly, revenge has shown to be related to poorer health outcomes in employees and the general

population (Aquino et al., 2006; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999). Forgiveness, on the other hand, reduces stress (Worthington et al., 2010).

Another reason why forgiving is beneficial is its capacity to repair relationships. Forgiveness promotes positive social exchanges between the victim and the transgressor, and may restore the original closeness of the relationship (McCullough et al., 1998; Worthington et al., 2010). Research suggests that forgiveness is related to an increase in commitment to, and satisfaction with, the relationship that previously experienced a transgression (Aquino et al., 2006; Finchman, Hall, & Beach, 2005; Worthington et al., 2010). This is an especially important function of forgiveness because damaged work relationships can decrease performance and productivity (Aquino et al., 2003). As such, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 6.** The mindfulness facets of (a) acting with awareness, (b) non-judging, (c) and non-reactivity will moderate the indirect effect of incivility on forgiveness through ruminative thought such that the indirect effect is stronger (vs. weaker) when mindfulness is higher (vs. lower).

**Hypothesis 7.** The mindfulness facets of (a) non-reactivity, (b) non-judging, and (c) acting with awareness will moderate the indirect effect of incivility on forgiveness through negative affect such that the indirect effect is stronger (vs. weaker) when mindfulness is higher (vs. lower). See Figure 3 for a diagram of the hypothesized model.

### **PVM versus WIS**

As discussed in the general introduction, workplace incivility, like many other mistreatment constructs is generally measured using a formative approach. Formative measures make it difficult to examine the overall experience of workplace incivility as each possible instance would be independent in nature, thereby necessitating a nuanced examination of the

construct as every instance would need to be examined separately. Examining the frequency with which uncivil behaviours have occurred can make it difficult to interpret the summed or latent factor score as it would be impossible to know how individuals perceived intensity and intent of each instance, which are arguably important factors that are needed to understand the causes and consequences of experienced incivility.

To this end, Hershcovis and Reich (2013) have advocated for the use of reflective measures. Reflective measures are advantageous in that they make it easier to understand the content and severity of the experience. Rather than ask the frequency with which an individual was lied to or ignored, reflective measures simply ask if individuals were treated rudely or uncivilly. Thus, if an individual does not perceive being ignored as uncivil, they would disagree with the statement. To date, the only reflective measure available to investigate workplace incivility is the Perceived Victimization Measure (PVM; Sasso, 2013). I opted to use this measure in conjunction with the WIS to optimize the measurement of workplace incivility.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

Three-hundred and thirteen employed participants were recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk. Amazon Mechanical Turk is a service that allows individuals to complete tasks for compensation. It has been found to be a reliable data source (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Of the 313 participants who responded, 17 indicated they were not employed and were thus removed from the sample. I also eliminated respondents due to non-purposeful responding. I used three instructional manipulation checks (IMC) where participants were instructed to pick a particular answer for a question. For example, a sample item included was “Answer strongly agree for this item.” IMCs have been found to increase reliability in data sets

(Meade, & Craig, 2012; Oppenheimerl, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009). If a participant answered two or three of the IMCs incorrectly, they were identified as being a potential non-purposeful responder. Consequently, eight participants were excluded from the analysis leaving 288 participants in the final sample. The mean age of participants was 34.37 ( $SD = 9.67$ ) and 47.9% were female. The mean length of time in their organization was 4.60 years ( $SD = 4.63$ ). Participants represented a wide range of industries (see Table 4 for a breakdown of this information).

**Sample Size Justification.** I chose the sample size based on published studies in high impact journals (i.e., *Journal of Applied Psychology*), which had investigated similar variables

Table 4

*Industry breakdown*

Industry	Frequency	Percent
Oil and Gas	4	1.4
Agriculture	3	1.0
Utilities	5	1.7
Construction	7	2.4
Manufacturing	15	5.2
Wholesale trade	4	1.4
Retail trade	38	13.2
Transportation	9	3.1
Information	22	7.7
Finance and insurance	18	6.3
Real Estate	4	1.4
Professional, scientific, and technical	36	15.5
Management of companies	8	2.8
Admin support	23	8.0
Education	25	8.7
Healthcare	20	7.0

Arts	8	2.8
Accommodation and food services	10	3.5
Other services	20	6.9
Public Administration	8	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>100</b>

using moderated mediation analyses. For example, both Long and Christian (2015), as well as Mitchel, Vogel, and Folger (2015) used moderated mediated analyses to investigate mistreatment and both employed samples of less than 300 ( $N = 270, 221$ , respectively). Additionally, Cheung and Lau (2015) published a simulation study where they found that moderated mediation models have decent power and low bias with a sample size of 100 and effect sizes as low as 0.2.

Accordingly, an a priori target sample of 300 was justified.

### **Procedure**

Ethics approval was obtained by the University of Western Ontario (see Appendix E). The entire study was conducted online. Potential participants were invited to participate through Amazon Mechanical Turk, where interested individuals were able to read a brief description of the study, and if they were interested in participating they could then access the survey. Participants were first presented with the letter of information and if they consented, were then re-directed to the study website and asked to complete a critical incident technique, the incivility and outcome measures, and the demographic items. Finally, participants were directed to the debriefing page. Participants received \$1 for their participation.

I incorporated the critical incident technique in my survey design as per the recommendation of Hershcovis (2011). Participants were asked to describe an incident where someone at work had treated them rudely. According to Hershcovis, most methods employed to assess workplace mistreatment are too general to assess participants' specific experiences and

reactions. Using a critical incident technique allows researchers to assess the specific actions of participants by having them focus on a specific event (Flanagan, 1954; Korsgaard, Brodt, & Whitener, 2002). Mitchel et al. (2015) and others (e.g., Bobocel, 2013; Wang et al., 2013) have used this technique and have found it to be valid and effective in assessing victims' perceptions of and reactions to workplace mistreatment. By asking participants to recall the details and context of the situation, vividness of the memory will be enhanced (Lang, Kozak, Miller, Levin, & McLean, 1980; Robinson & Clore, 2001, as cited in Mitchel et al., 2015; see Appendix G).

### **Measures**

Respondents were asked to complete the following scales keeping in mind the incivility incident they had described.

**Workplace Incivility.** The WIS (Cortina et al., 2001) was used to measure incivility. An example item is: "My co-worker/supervisor paid little attention to a statement I made or showed little interest in my opinion." Participants responded using a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The WIS is located in Appendix H.

**Perceived Victimization.** The PVM (Sasso, 2013) was a reflective measure used to assess participants' perceptions of workplace incivility to the situation they described. To my knowledge this is the only reflective measure currently available to incivility and aggression researchers. A sample item is: "I was intentionally subjected to a hurtful experience." Participants responded on seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The PVM can be located in Appendix I.

**Forgiveness.** Rye, Loiacono, Folk, Olszewski, Heim, & Madia's (2001) Forgiveness scale was used to measure participants' forgiveness toward their perpetrator. A sample item is: "I have been able to let go of my anger toward the person who wronged me." Participants



responded on seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The Forgiveness Scale can be located in Appendix J.

**Affect.** Affect was measured using a shortened version of the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1998). Respondents rated the extent to which they experienced each affect as a consequence of the uncivil interaction. An example item is: “Following the uncivil experience you described, how irritable did you feel?” Items were rated on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (slightly or not at all) to 7 (very much). The scale can be located in Appendix K.

**Rumination.** Sukhodolsky, Golub, and Cromwell’s (2001) Anger Rumination Scale (ARS) was used to assess ruminative thought as a result of the situation. A sample item is: “I turned the matter over and over again in my mind.” Participants rated their responses using a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale can be located in Appendix L.

**Stress.** An abbreviated version of the Mental Health Index (MHI; Viet & Ware, 1983) was used to assess stress. Participants reported on the frequency with which they felt “very nervous” or “tense or high strung” as a consequence of the situation identified on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 7 (most of the time). The scale can be located in Appendix M.

**Non-reactivity, non-judging, and awareness.** Three scales from the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer et al., 2006) were used to assess the mindfulness facets of non-reactivity (7 items), non-judging (8 items), and awareness (8 items). Participants reported on the accuracy with which they experience different items on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (never

or very rarely true) to 7 (very often or always true). A sample item is: “I rush through activities without being really attentive to them”. The scale can be located in Appendix N.

### **Analytic Procedure**

I conducted the moderation and the moderated mediation analyses using Hayes’ (2013) PROCESS SPSS macros. PROCESS is a computational tool for path analysis-based moderation and mediation analysis and their combination (e.g., moderated mediation). PROCESS is able to estimate conditional direct effects and conditional indirect effects such as the ones proposed in this study by using an ordinary least squares-based path analytical framework (Hayes, 2013). Moreover, PROCESS facilitates bias-corrected bootstrapping methods for deriving confidence intervals for the indirect and direct effects, which is advantageous as compared the Sobel test (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). Additionally, PROCESS can center the independent variables around the mean to reduce concerns over multicollinearity involved with including the interaction in the model (Aiken, West, & Reno 1991).

Bootstrap confidence intervals are preferred over the traditional Sobel test for inference about the significance of indirect effects as the latter relies upon an unrealistic assumption about the shape of the sampling distribution of the mediation effect (Hayes, 2013). Accordingly, the confidence intervals produced by bootstrapping procedures might be deemed more accurate. In generating conditional direct and indirect effects (i.e., moderator effects), PROCESS estimates the sample mean of the moderator (in this case, mindfulness) and plus and minus one standard deviation from the moderator mean. PROCESS can estimate numerous different moderation and mediation models. To estimate the moderation hypotheses (Hypotheses 1-3), I used Model 1. Here, PROCESS estimated the conditional effect of the mindfulness facets (i.e., awareness, non-

judging, or non-reactivity) on the relationship between X (incivility) and Y (stress, rumination, or negative affect).

To estimate the moderated mediation hypotheses (Hypotheses 4-7), or conditional indirect process model as referenced by Hayes (2013), I used Model 7. Using Model 7, PROCESS estimates the conditional (mindfulness) indirect effect of X (incivility) on Y (stress or forgiveness) through M (negative affect or rumination) by generating bias corrected 95% bootstrap confidence intervals using 10,000 bootstrap models. Mediation and moderation are significant if the 95% bias corrected confidence intervals for the conditional indirect effects do not include zero. This is equivalent to a significance value of  $p < .05$  (Hayes, 2013).

## **Results**

Table 5 presents variables' means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities.

### **Preliminary Analyses**

Before testing my proposed hypotheses, I performed confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to ensure the discriminant validity of the measures. Given that the ratio of sample size and total item numbers can impair fit indices and may be associated with biased parameter estimates, I created three-item parcels for each variable (i.e., WIS, Perceived Victimization, Rumination, Negative Affect, Awareness, Non-judging, Non-reactivity, Stress, and Forgiveness) following the item-to-construct balance method (Williams, Vandenberg, & Edwards, 2009). I tested four models of comparison: a one-factor model which combined all variables, a seven-factor model that combined the three mindfulness facets, an eight-factor model which combined negative affect and stress (this was deemed necessary due to the high correlation between the two variables), and the hypothesized nine-factor model. The CFA results (see Table 6) indicated that the hypothesized nine-factor model was the best fit to the data compared to other models.

### Test of Moderation Hypotheses

In the interest of clarity, readability, and reduced redundancy, I only report the significant interactions. Overall, for non-significant interactions, all the main effects were significant and in the expected direction. That is, incivility was always significantly positively associated with rumination, negative affect, and stress. Mindfulness facets were always negatively associated with the rumination, negative affect, and stress outcomes. Tables 7 and 8 include unstandardized beta values, changes in  $R^2$ , and  $p$ -values for all interactions hypothesized. When an interaction was significant, I plotted the simple slopes.

**Rumination.** Hypothesis 1 examined whether the mindfulness facets of (a) non-reactivity, (b) non-judging, and (c) acting with awareness moderated the relationship with incivility and rumination. The only interaction that was significant was for non-reactivity when incivility was measured by the WIS

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics, Alpha Coefficients, and Correlations*

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>
1. Incivility	4.54	1.21	.82											
2. PV	4.97	1.53	.64**	.86										
3. Non-judging	4.40	1.56	-.11	-.10	.95									
4. Non-reactivity	4.43	1.20	.01	.03	.21**	.90								
5. Awareness	4.88	1.40	.06	.09	.50**	.33**	.93							
6. Rumination	4.04	1.36	.20**	.29**	-.47**	-.33**	-.42**	.92						
7. Negative Affect	2.85	1.39	.27**	.23**	-.41**	-.21**	-.33**	.56**	.92					
8. Stress	3.38	1.59	.31**	.33**	-.48**	-.22**	-.37**	.67**	.73**	.96				
9. Forgiveness	4.38	1.08	-.34**	-.41**	.27**	.21**	.26**	-.61**	-.48**	-.51**	.85			
10. Age	34.37	9.67	-.10	-.01	.15*	.14*	.20**	-.01	-.15*	-.11	.14*	--		
11. Tenure	4.60	4.63	-.08	.00	.06	-.01	.17**	.00	-.15**	-.03	.02	.30**	--	
12. Gender	.48	.50	-.15*	-.06	.03	-.06	-.05	.02	.01	.04	.10	.16**	-.06	--

Note. n = 288. PV = Perceived Victimization. Gender coded as male = 0, female = 1. Alpha coefficients are presented in the diagonal.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 6

*Results of Confirmatory Factor Analyses*

Models	$\chi^2$	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
<i>One-factor model:</i>							
Combine all	3939.10*	324	--	--	.37	.42	.20
<i>Seven-factor model:</i>							
Combine non-judging, non-reactivity, and awareness	1611.02*	303	2086.91*	21	.76	.79	.12
<i>Eight-factor model:</i>							
Combine negative affect and stress	727.71*	296	674.07*	7	.92	.93	.07
<i>Nine-factor model:</i>							
The hypothesized model	541.33*	288	178.74*	8	.95	.96	.06

*Note.* Both  $\Delta\chi^2$  and  $\Delta df$  were computed against the preceding model, using Santorra-Bentler correction (i.e., eight-factor model versus the seven-factor model). \* $p < .001$ .

**WIS  $\times$  Non-reactivity.** The results of the moderated regression analysis showed the incivility  $\times$  non-reactivity interaction significantly predicted rumination ( $b = .11, p = .02$ ). I plotted the significant interaction term (see Figure 4): individuals low on non-reactivity (i.e., individuals who reacted to the event) experienced higher levels of rumination than individuals high on non-reactivity (i.e., those who did not react to the event), at both high and low levels of workplace incivility. Contrary to my hypothesis, the relationship between incivility and non-rumination was stronger for individuals high in non-reactivity. Thus, Hypothesis 1a was partially supported such that at low levels of incivility, individuals high in non-reactivity ruminated less but as incivility increases, those individuals ruminated more.

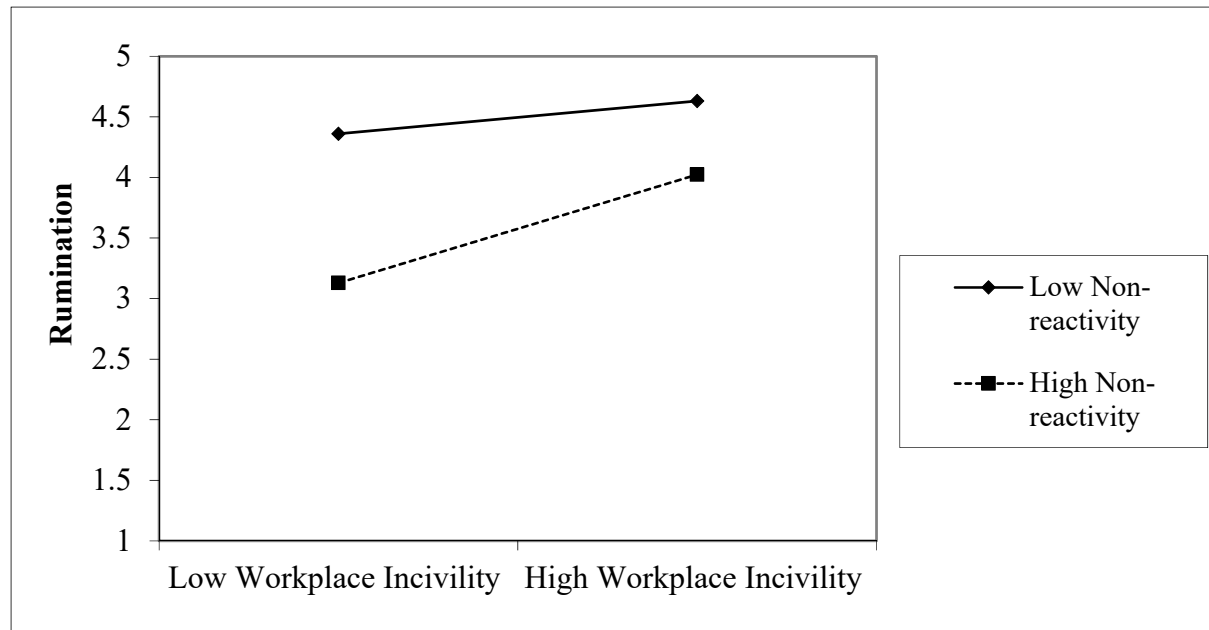


Figure 4. Graphical depiction of the relationship between WIS and rumination at different levels of non-reactivity

### Negative Affect

Hypothesis 2 examined whether the mindfulness facets of (a) non-reactivity, (b) non-judging, and (c) acting with awareness moderated the relationship with incivility and negative affect.

**PVM × Non-judging.** Hypothesis 2b proposed that non-judging would interact with perceived victimization to influence negative affect. The regression analysis showed the perceived victimization × non-judging interaction significantly predicted negative affect ( $b = -.08, p = .01$ ). The interaction is illustrated in Figure 5 and shows the positive relationship between perceived victimization and negative affect was stronger at lower levels of non-judging; following an uncivil experience, participants who evaluated the experience as negative were more likely to experience negative affect. Thus, Hypothesis 2b was supported.

Table 7

*Moderated Regression Analyses Predicting Rumination, Negative Affect, and Stress with the WIS*

Variable	Rumination			Negative Affect			Stress		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
WIS	.17**	.06	2.89**	.26**	.06	4.25**	.34**	.07	5.15**
Non-judging	-.40**	.05	- 8.74**	-.34**	.05	- 7.26**	-.46**	.05	- 8.92**
WIS × Non-judging	-.01	.04	-.35	-.04	.04	- 1.05	-.05	.04	- 1.17
$R^2_{main\ effects}$	.25**			.22**			.30**		
$\Delta R^2_{interaction}$	.00			.00			.00		
WIS	.24**	.06	3.94**	.31**	.06	4.87**	.42**	.07	5.78**
Non-reactivity	-.38**	.06	- 6.12**	-.25**	.06	- 3.82**	-.30**	.07	- 4.17**
WIS × Non-reactivity	<b>.11*</b>	<b>.05</b>	<b>2.33*</b>	.05	.05	0.95	.08	.05	1.56
$R^2_{main\ effects}$	.17**			.12**			.15**		
$\Delta R^2_{interaction}$	<b>.02*</b>			.00			.01		
WIS	.26**	.06	4.36**	.33**	.05	5.39**	.44**	.07	6.44**
Awareness	-.42**	.05	- 8.30**	-.34**	.06	- 6.47**	-.44**	.06	- 7.52**
WIS × Awareness	-.02	.04	- 0.49	-.03	.04	- 0.81	-.04	.05	- 0.83
$R^2_{main\ effects}$	.23**			.19**			.25**		
$\Delta R^2_{interaction}$	.00			.00			.00		

*Note.*  $n = 288$ .  $b$  = unstandardized coefficients,  $SE$  = standard error. Values in bold are supported hypotheses. Table presents results regression coefficients from the final step of the moderated multiple regressions.

\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*  $p < .05$ .



Table 8

*Moderated Regression Analyses Predicting Rumination, Negative Affect, and Stress with the PVM*

Variable	Rumination			Negative Affect			Stress		
	b	SE	t	b	SE	t	b	SE	t
PVM	.22**	.05	4.99**	.18**	.05	3.81**	.30**	.05	5.86**
Non-judging	-.38**	.04	- 8.57**	-.33**	.05	- 6.93**	-.44**	.05	- 8.70**
PVM × Non-judging	-.03	.03	- 1.11	-.07*	.03	- 2.47*	-.06	.03	- 1.83
$R^2_{main\ effects}$	.29			.22**			.32		
$\Delta R^2_{interaction}$	.003			.02*			.008		
<hr/>									
PVM	.27**	.05	5.77**	.22**	.05	4.28**	.35**	.06	6.21**
Non-reactivity	-.40**	.06	- 6.58**	-.25**	.07	- 3.85**	-.31**	.07	- 4.27**
PVM × Non-reactivity	.06	.04	1.56	.02	.04	0.52	.02	.05	.52
$R^2_{main\ effects}$	.21			.10			.16		
$\Delta R^2_{interaction}$	.007			.001			.001		
<hr/>									
PVM	.30**	.04	6.63**	.24**	.05	4.98**	.38**	.05	7.28**
Awareness	-.43**	.05	- 8.86**	-.34**	.05	- 6.41**	-.46**	.06	- 7.75**
PVM × Awareness	-.02	.03	- 0.65	-.08*	.03	- 2.20*	-.09*	.04	- 2.48*
$R^2_{main\ effects}$	.29**			.19**			.28*		
$\Delta R^2_{interaction}$	.001			.01*			.02		

Note. N = 288. b = unstandardized coefficients, SE = standard error. Values in bold are supported hypotheses. Table presents results regression coefficients from the final step of the moderated multiple regressions.

\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*  $p < .05$ .

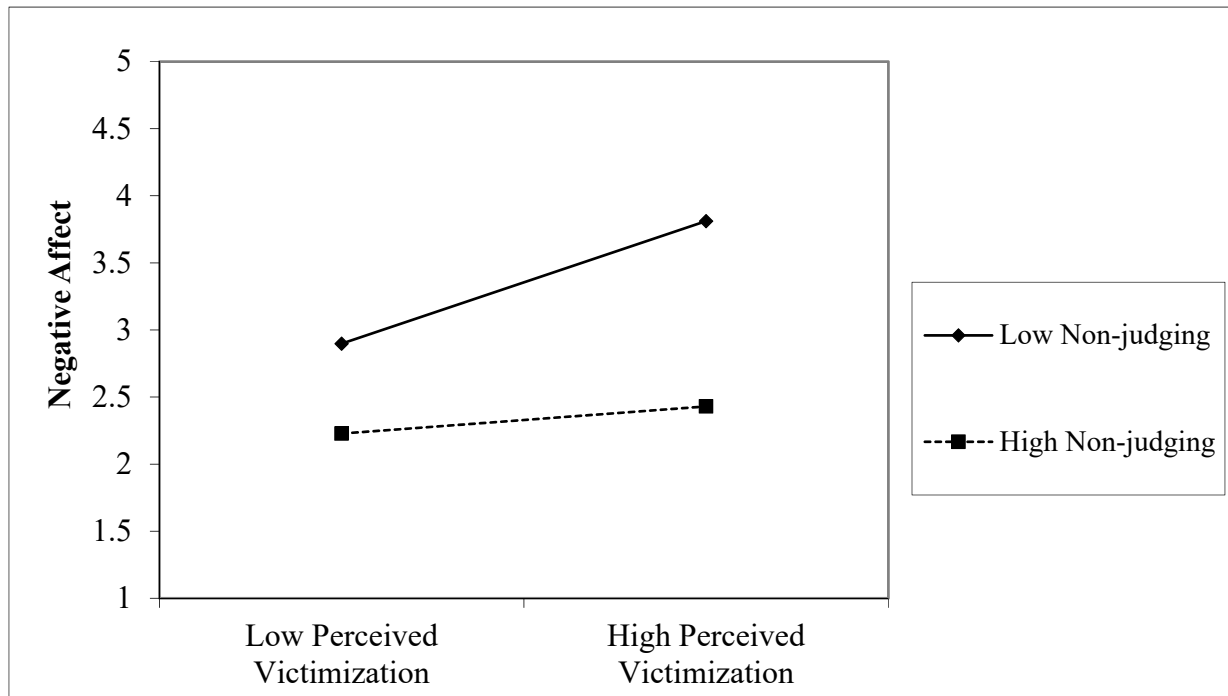


Figure 5. Graphical depiction of the relationship between PVM and negative affect at different levels of non-judging

**PVM × Awareness.** Hypothesis 2c proposed that awareness would interact with perceived victimization to influence negative affect. Moderation results showed the perceived victimization × awareness interaction significantly predicted negative affect ( $b = -.076, p = .03$ ). Graphing the results of the interaction (see Figure 6) indicated that the positive relationship between perceived victimization and negative affect was stronger at lower levels of awareness. Thus, Hypothesis 2c was supported.

### Stress

**PVM × Awareness.** Hypothesis 3c proposed that awareness would interact with perceived victimization to influence stress. Moderation results showed the perceived victimization × awareness interaction significantly predicted stress ( $b = -.092, p = .014$ ). Plotting the significant interaction term (see Figure 7) showed that the positive relationship

between perceived victimization and stress was stronger at lower levels of awareness. Thus, when using the PVM, Hypothesis 3c was supported.

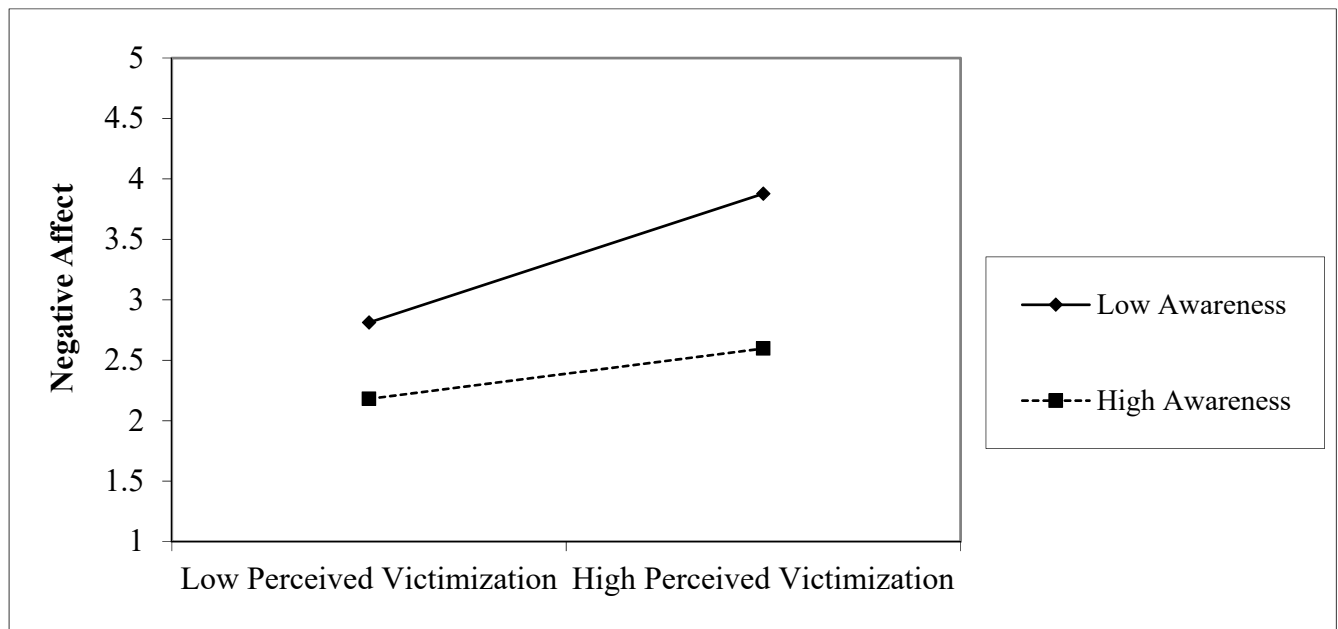


Figure 6. Graphical depiction of the relationship between the PVM and negative affect at different levels of acting with awareness.

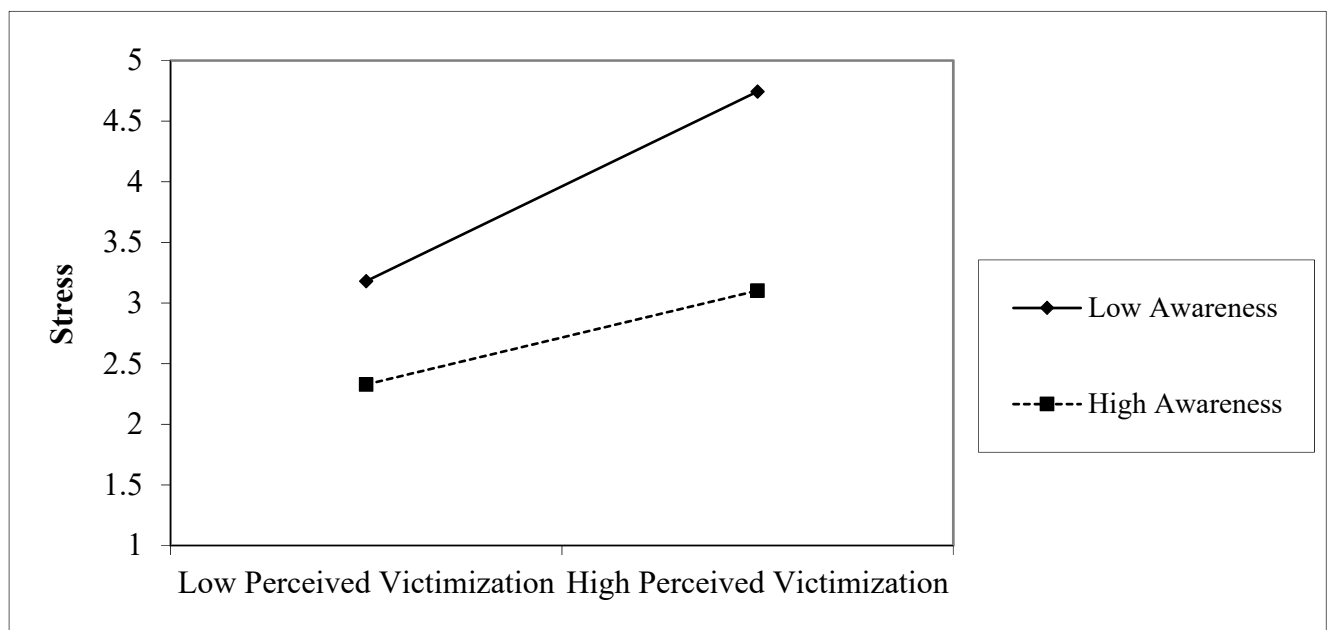


Figure 7. Graphical depiction of the relationship between the PVM and stress at different levels of acting with awareness.

Table 9 provides a summary of the support for each moderation hypothesis and whether it was supported using the WIS or the PVM.

Table 9

*Summary of Moderation Hypotheses*

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Supported?</b>
Incivility → Rumination; moderated by non-reactivity	WIS	Partially
Incivility → Rumination; moderated by non-judging	WIS	No
Incivility → Rumination; moderated by acting with awareness	WIS	No
Incivility → Rumination; moderated by non-reactivity	PVM	No
Incivility → Rumination; moderated by non-judging	PVM	No
Incivility → Rumination; moderated by acting with awareness	PVM	No
Incivility → NA; moderated by non-reactivity	WIS	No
Incivility → NA; moderated by non-judging	WIS	No
Incivility → NA; moderated by acting with awareness	WIS	No
Incivility → NA; moderated by non-reactivity	PVM	No
Incivility → NA; moderated by non-judging	PVM	Yes
Incivility → NA; moderated by acting with awareness	PVM	Yes

Incivility → stress; moderated by non-reactivity	WIS	No
Incivility → stress; moderated by non-judging	WIS	No
Incivility → stress; moderated by acting with awareness	WIS	No
Incivility → stress; moderated by non-reactivity	PVM	No
Incivility → stress; moderated by non-judging	PVM	No
Incivility → stress; moderated by acting with awareness	PVM	Yes

### Test of Moderated Mediation Hypotheses

#### Stress via Rumination

I predicted that the mindfulness facets of non-judging, non-reactivity, and awareness would attenuate the indirect effect of incivility on stress through rumination. Results did not support these Hypotheses (4a-4c) as the index of moderated mediation (IMM; Hayes 2013) always had a confidence interval that included zero. Although results did not support my hypotheses, results showed that there was an indirect effect of rumination on the relationship between incivility and stress regardless of non-judging, non-reactivity, and awareness levels. Individuals experiencing incivility reported greater levels of rumination and consequently higher levels of stress. This was true for the WIS and the PVM. See Tables 10 and 11 for effect values, IMM values, and confidence intervals.

#### Stress via Negative Affect

**WIS × Mindfulness.** Hypotheses 5a-5c predicted that non-judging, non-reactivity, and awareness would moderate the indirect effect of incivility on stress through negative affect. The

indices of moderated mediations all included zero suggesting no significant moderated mediation effect. Thus, Hypotheses 5a-5c were not supported.

Results, however, showed that there was an indirect effect of negative affect on the relationship between incivility and stress regardless of mindfulness levels (confidence intervals excluded zero). Individuals experiencing incivility reported greater levels of negative affect and consequently higher levels of stress (See Table 12).

***PVM × Mindfulness.*** Hypotheses 5a-5c predicting that non-judging, non-reactivity, and awareness would attenuate the indirect effect of incivility on stress through negative affect was also investigated when incivility was measuring via the PVM.

Results supported Hypothesis 5b as the index of moderated mediated had a confidence interval that excluded zero ( $IMM = -.065$ ,  $95\%CI = [-.122 - -.018]$ ). The indirect effect of negative affect on the relationship between incivility and stress was only significant at low and average levels of non-judging. Only when individuals reported average and low levels of non-judging did negative affect mediate the relationship between incivility and stress. See Table 13 for effect values and confidence intervals. Thus, Hypothesis 5b was supported.

Additionally, I found support for Hypothesis 5c. The index of moderated mediation had a confidence interval which excluded zero ( $IMM = -.066$ ,  $95\%CI = [-.119 - -.013]$ ). The indirect effect of negative affect on the relationship between incivility and stress was stronger at low levels of awareness (see Table 13).

Hypothesis 5a, which predicted that non-reactivity would moderate the indirect effect of incivility on stress through negative affect was not supported ( $IMM = .018$ ,  $95\%CI = [-.054 - .094]$ ). There was however, a significant indirect effect of negative affect on the relationship between incivility and stress regardless of non-reactivity levels (confidence intervals excluded

zero). Individuals experiencing incivility reported greater levels of negative affect and consequently higher levels of stress (see Table 13).

### **Forgiveness via Rumination**

Hypotheses 6a-6c predicted that the mindfulness facets would attenuate the indirect effect of incivility on forgiveness through rumination. Results did not support these hypotheses as the indices of moderation all included zero (see Tables 10 and 11). Nonetheless, rumination mediated the relationship between incivility and forgiveness for both the WIS and the PVM. Specifically, individuals who reported higher levels of incivility also reported higher levels of ruminations and in turn, were less likely to forgive their perpetrator.

### **Forgiveness via Negative Affect**

**WIS  $\times$  Mindfulness.** I did not find support for Hypotheses 7a-7c. The mindfulness facets of non-judging, non-reactivity, and awareness did not moderate the indirect effect of incivility on forgiveness through negative affect. As seen in Table 12, all the indices of moderated mediation included zero. Negative affect, however, did mediate the relationship between incivility and forgiveness such that, regardless of mindfulness levels, individuals who experienced incivility also experienced negative affect and consequently, were less likely to forgive their perpetrator (see Table 12 for effect values and confidence intervals).

Table 10

*Moderated Mediation Analyses with the WIS as the Independent Variable and Rumination as the Mediator*

Conditional Indirect Effects of		Stress				Forgiveness			
Non-judging	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	
1 SD below mean	.14	.06	.03	.26	-.08	.03	-.15	-.02	
Mean	.13	.05	.03	.26	-.08	.03	-.13	-.02	
1 SD above mean	.11	.07	-.02	.26	-.07	.04	-.16	.01	
IMM	-.01	.03	-.07	.05	.01	.02	-.03	.04	
Non-reactivity									
1 SD below mean	.08	.08	-.08	.22	-.05	.05	-.14	.05	
Mean	.18	.05	.08	.23	-.11	.03	-.17	-.05	
1 SD above mean	.28	.07	.14	.43	-.17	.05	-.27	-.08	
IMM	.08	.05	-.01	.18	-.05	.03	-.11	.00	
Awareness									
1 SD below mean	.21	.06	.10	.35	-.13	.04	-.21	-.06	
Mean	.19	.05	.10	.29	-.11	.03	-.18	-.06	
1 SD above mean	.17	.07	.03	.32	-.10	.04	-.19	-.02	
IMM	-.02	.04	-.09	.05	.01	.02	-.03	.05	

Note. n = 288. IMM = Index of Moderated Moderation. SE = Standardized Error. LLCI = Lower Level Confidence Interval. ULCI = Upper Level Confidence Interval.



Table 11

*Moderated Mediation Analyses with the PVM as the Independent Variable and Rumination as the Mediator*

Conditional Indirect Effects of		Stress				Forgiveness			
Non-judging	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	
1 SD below mean	.20	.07	.10	.32	– .12	.03	– .18	– .06	
Mean	.17	.04	.09	.24	– .10	.02	– .15	– .05	
1 SD above mean	.13	.05	.03	.23	– .08	.03	– .14	– .02	
IMM	– .02	.02	– .07	.02	.01	.01	– .01	.04	
Non-reactivity									
1 SD below mean	.15	.05	.04	.26	– .09	.03	– .15	– .03	
Mean	.20	.04	.12	.28	– .12	.03	– .17	– .07	
1 SD above mean	.25	.06	.14	.37	– .15	.03	– .22	– .09	
IMM	.05	.04	– .02	.11	– .03	.02	– .06	.01	
Awareness									
1 SD below mean	.24	.06	.14	.37	– .14	.03	– .21	– .08	
Mean	.22	.04	.15	.30	– .13	.02	– .18	– .08	
1 SD above mean	.20	.05	.09	.31	– .11	.03	– .19	– .05	
IMM	– .02	.03	– .08	.04	.01	.02	– .02	.05	

Note. n = 288. IMM = Index of Moderated Moderation. SE = Standardized Error. LLCI = Lower Level Confidence Interval. ULCI = Upper Level Confidence Interval.

Table 12

*Moderated Mediation Analyses with the WIS as the Independent Variable and Negative Affect as the Mediator*

Conditional Indirect Effects of		Stress				Forgiveness			
Non-judging	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	
1 SD below mean	.28	.09	.15	.45	– .10	.03	– .17	– .04	
Mean	.23	.06	.11	.34	– .08	.02	– .13	– .04	
1 SD above mean	.17	.07	.05	.32	– .06	.03	– .12	– .02	
IMM	– .03	.03	– .10	.04	.01	.01	– .01	.04	
Non-reactivity									
1 SD below mean	.22	.09	.06	.39	– .08	.03	– .15	– .02	
Mean	.27	.06	.15	.40	– .10	.03	– .15	– .06	
1 SD above mean	.32	.09	.16	.50	– .12	.03	– .19	– .06	
IMM	.04	.05	– .05	.14	– .02	.02	– .05	.02	
Awareness									
1 SD below mean	.33	.09	.16	.49	– .12	.03	– .19	– .06	
Mean	.29	.06	.17	.41	– .11	.02	– .16	– .06	
1 SD above mean	.25	.08	.09	.40	– .09	.03	– .16	– .04	
IMM	– .04	.04	– .10	.06	.01	.01	– .02	.04	

Note. n = 288. IMM = Index of Moderated Moderation. SE = Standardized Error. LLCI = Lower Level Confidence Interval. ULCI = Upper Level Confidence Interval.

Table 13

*Moderated Mediation Analyses with the PVM as the Independent Variable and Negative Affect as the Mediator*

Conditional Indirect Effects of		Stress				Forgiveness			
Non-judging	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	
1 SD below mean	.26	.06	.15	.39	– .09	.02	– .15	– .05	
Mean	.16	.04	.08	.24	– .06	.02	– .10	– .03	
1 SD above mean	.06	.06	– .06	.16	– .02	.02	– .06	.02	
IMM	– .07	.03	– .12	– .02	.02	.01	.01	.05	
Non-reactivity									
1 SD below mean	.17	.07	.04	.30	– .06	.03	– .12	– .01	
Mean	.19	.05	.10	.28	– .07	.02	– .11	– .04	
1 SD above mean	.21	.06	.09	.34	– .08	.02	– .13	– .04	
IMM	.02	.04	– .05	.09	– .01	.01	– .03	.02	
Awareness									
1 SD below mean	.30	.06	.19	.42	– .11	.03	– .16	– .06	
Mean	.21	.04	.13	.30	– .08	.02	– .12	– .04	
1 SD above mean	.12	.06	.01	.23	– .04	.02	– .09	– .00	
IMM	– .07	.03	– .12	– .01	.02	.01	.01	.05	

Note. n = 288. IMM = Index of Moderated Moderation. SE = Standardized Error. LLCI = Lower Level Confidence Interval. ULCI = Upper Level Confidence Interval. Values in bold are supported hypotheses.

***PVM × Mindfulness.*** Hypotheses 7b and 7c predicting that non-judging and awareness would attenuate the indirect effect of incivility on forgiveness through negative affect was supported (IMM = .024, 95%CI = [.008-.047]; IMM = .024, 95%CI = [.006-.046], respectively) when incivility was assessed using the PVM. Only for individuals with low or average levels of non-judging did incivility lead to higher levels of negative affect, thereby leading to lower levels of forgiveness (see Table 13). Additionally, the conditional indirect effect of negative effect for perceived victimization on forgiveness was stronger at lower levels of awareness. That is, perceived victimization lead to higher levels of negative affect and thereby lower forgiveness more strongly at lower levels of awareness.

Even though, Hypothesis 7a, which predicted that non-reactivity would attenuate the indirect effect of incivility on forgiveness through negative affect, was not supported (confidence interval included zero), there was a significant mediating effect of negative affect. Regardless of levels of non-reactivity, negative affect mediated the relationship between incivility and forgiveness. Individuals experiencing incivility reported greater levels of negative affect and consequently were less likely to forgive their perpetrator. See Table 13 for effect values and confidence intervals.

Table 14 provides a summary of the support for each moderated mediation hypothesis and whether it was supported using the WIS or the PVM.

### **Control Variables**

The results reported here were analyzed without the use of control variables. The most common control variables in the incivility literature are age, sex, and tenure (e.g., Harold & Holtz, 2014; Lim & Tai, 2013; Mitchell et al., in press). Previous studies have found employees who are younger in age, female, and newer to the organization experience more incivility,

Table 14

*Summary of Moderated Mediation Hypotheses*

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Supported?</b>
Incivility → rumination → stress; moderated by non-reactivity	WIS	No
Incivility → rumination → stress; moderated by non-judging	WIS	No
Incivility → rumination → stress; moderated by acting with awareness	WIS	No
Incivility → rumination → stress; moderated by non-reactivity	PVM	No
Incivility → rumination → stress; moderated by non-judging	PVM	No
Incivility → rumination → stress; moderated by acting with awareness	PVM	No
Incivility → NA → stress; moderated by non-reactivity	WIS	No
Incivility → NA → stress; moderated by non-judging	WIS	No
Incivility → NA → stress; moderated by acting with awareness	WIS	No
Incivility → NA → stress; moderated by non-reactivity	PVM	No
Incivility → NA → stress; moderated by non-judging	PVM	Yes
Incivility → NA → stress; moderated by acting with awareness	PVM	Yes
Incivility → rumination → forgiveness; moderated by non-reactivity	WIS	No
Incivility → rumination → forgiveness; moderated by non-judging	WIS	No
Incivility → rumination → forgiveness; moderated by acting with awareness	WIS	No
Incivility → rumination → forgiveness; moderated by non-reactivity	PVM	No
Incivility → rumination → forgiveness; moderated by non-judging	PVM	No

Incivility → rumination → forgiveness; moderated by acting with awareness	PVM	No
Incivility → NA → forgiveness; moderated by non-reactivity	WIS	No
Incivility → NA → forgiveness; moderated by non-judging	WIS	No
Incivility → NA → forgiveness; moderated by acting with awareness	WIS	No
Incivility → NA → forgiveness; moderated by non-reactivity	PVM	No
Incivility → NA → forgiveness; moderated by non-judging	PVM	Yes
Incivility → NA → forgiveness; moderated by acting with awareness	PVM	Yes

although the inclusion of these controls do not tend to be accompanied with strong theory (see O'Neill, McLarnon, Schneider, & Gardner, 2014). When examining my correlations, in general, age, sex, and tenure were not significantly correlated with the dependent variables. Moreover, because the same pattern of results was found when adding the control variables (i.e., the significance level/confidence interval did not change), I reported the results without controlling for age, sex, or tenure. This is in line with recent recommendations from Bernerth and Aguinis (2016) who argue that if tests of one's hypotheses with and without control variables yield the same results, then authors can report results without controlling for those variables. This helps maximize statistical power and allows for presentation of the most interpretable results, and those that are likely to be most replicable (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016; O'Neill et al., 2014).

### Discussion

The goal of this study was to investigate the role of three dispositional mindfulness facets (non-reactivity, non-judging, and acting with awareness) as self-regulatory factors that buffer processes underlying the incivility-stress relationship and the incivility-forgiveness relationship. The results suggested that *generally* the mindfulness facets of awareness and non-judging

reduced stress and increased forgiveness by mitigating negative affect, but not rumination. The following discussions will summarize key findings and highlight limitations. The implications for theory and practice are reserved for the General Discussion.

Interestingly, other than one interaction using the WIS, I only observed significant moderations and moderated mediations when incivility was measured using the PVM (see Tables 13 and 14 for a summary of findings). Specifically, non-judging and awareness moderated the relationship between incivility and negative affect and between incivility and stress. In each of these cases, results supported my hypotheses, such that individuals experienced more negative affect or stress when they reported lower mindfulness.

The moderated mediations showed that when incivility was measured using the PVM, the indirect effect of negative affect on the relationship between incivility and stress and the relationship between incivility and forgiveness was weaker when participants reported higher levels of non-judging and awareness (i.e., among more mindful participants). Individuals were more likely to experience negative affect and consequently more likely to experience stress and less likely to forgive when they reported lower levels of non-judging and awareness. Accordingly, after experiencing an uncivil incident, if individuals are mindful, as measured by non-judging and awareness scales, they would be less likely to be distressed by negative thoughts or negative affect. They would then be less likely to stress and have a greater tendency to forgive. According to COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), this is because the uncivil incident is no longer perceived as a threat to resources like self-worth or social belonging and thus employees would have no need to replenish the loss or depletion in resources. If individuals are not harboring negative thoughts or affects, the process of forgiveness is either easier or not even necessary (i.e., there is nothing to forgive).

Although I did not find support for all my moderated mediation hypotheses, both negative affect and rumination were found to be significant mediators of the incivility-stress relationship as well as the incivility-forgiveness relationship. In almost all the moderated-mediation relations investigated, after experiencing an incivility incident, participants reported higher levels of rumination and negative affect. In turn, they also reported higher levels of stress and were less likely to forgive their perpetrator. As such, these results corroborate previous findings (e.g., Giumetti et al., 2013; Ghosh et al., 2011; Park et al., in press; Wang, Liu, Liao, gong, Kammeyer-Mueller, & Shi, 2013) showing that negative affect and rumination are mediators of the relationships between incivility and stress and extend the findings to an often-forgotten outcome, forgiveness.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations that warrant discussion. Measurement issues are a first limitation. For instance, only one of the hypotheses reached significance when incivility was measured using the formative measure. The fact that several of my hypotheses were supported when using the PVM suggests that the assessing incivility via behavioural indicators (i.e., via the WIS) rather than reflectively may be the source of the problem. The WIS asks about different behaviours which when summed might not have been a true representation of the experience. The PVM might be preferred because rather than asking about different behaviours, it measures how the participant interprets behaviours in general or behaviours in a specific context or situation. In fact, how an individual interprets an incident might be crucial to some constructs, like forgiveness. One of the key points of forgiveness is that there is a perception of wrongdoing. This perception is impossible to capture if only relying on the WIS. As mentioned previously, the WIS asks about the frequency with which individuals have encountered certain



behaviours, but not how they perceived those behaviours. In contrast, the PVM is a reflective measure that explicitly asks individuals if they were hurt by the behaviour.

As with most survey studies, I am unable to speak to the causal nature of the relationships observed. Experimental and longitudinal research are needed to show such things as temporal stability and reverse association. Researchers can also potentially investigate participants' reactions to workplace incivility using either written or actual scenarios. Because participants were asked to recall an incivility incident, I cannot rule out recall bias and memory effects. Using the critical incident technique does ease these concerns, however. Integrating a critical incident technique helps participants not only recall important details, but also enhances the accuracy and vividness of retrospection (Lang, Kozak Miller, Levin, & McLean, 1980; Robinson & Clore, 2001, as cited in Mitchell et al., in press, p. 6).

Another limitation may be the self-reported nature of the data as it might increase the risk of common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). However, Conway and Lance (2010) argued against the negative impact of common method variance, suggesting that in certain circumstances they are the most appropriate form of measurement. This is especially true when participants are reporting on internal processes and evaluations for which even a well-acquainted other would not have available accurate information beyond simple heuristics. Workplace incivility, rumination, and forgiveness are internal cognitive and affective processes that only the individual participant can report on as they alone have access to their private thoughts, self-report data was clearly the most theoretically appropriate for the current research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: General Discussion

### Overview

The broad goals of this dissertation were to (1) investigate workplace incivility using an under-utilized method, and (2) explore new variables that could buffer negative response to incivility and promote positive ones. To these ends, my first study was qualitative in nature, whereby I interviewed 16 participants from varying occupational backgrounds to obtain rich descriptions of workplace incivility experiences. In my second study, I investigated whether three mindfulness facets (non-reactivity, non-judging, and acting with awareness) buffered the effect of incivility on stress via reduced negative affect and rumination. I also examined whether the same three mindfulness facets could promote forgiveness via the same mechanisms (i.e., rumination and negative affect). In this chapter, I first discuss and integrate the findings from both studies. Following, I present the theoretical implications as well as limitations and future research. Finally, I discuss the practical implications of this research.

### Discussion and Integration of Findings

The experience of workplace incivility revealed by my qualitative interviews contained several elements ranging from initial reactions to coping strategies and changes in relationships to future strategies. This was a unique contribution to knowledge available on incivility in that it mapped the whole process rather than looking at a snapshot or one segment of the experience. This is also in line with social interactionist theory, which is more focused on the personal and situational factors involved in an incivility exchange and in understanding how these factors contribute to the process and perception of incivility.

**Incivility intent and the PVM.** Many participants in Study 1 began by mentioning how the behaviour experienced was uncivil in their perspective. Because they still remembered the

incident, the incident had implications for how they would interact with the person in the future. This could be why in Study 2, I found more support for my hypotheses when using the PVM to measure of incivility. It stands to reason that not all behaviour is equal, but the intent behind the behaviour is important. In accordance with Hershcovis and Reich (2013), I would argue that the content in reflective items (e.g., I was *intentionally* subjected to a hurtful experience) has the same underlying meaning, whereas the WIS comprises items that assess conceptually different content (e.g., My supervisor or co-worker interrupted or “spoke over” me). The variation in responses observed in PVM is easier to interpret thus enabling researchers to assess more accurately the severity and intent of the incivility experience (Tarraf et al., 2017). Moreover, almost all the participants in Study 1 described one incident of incivility. The WIS, however, assesses several different experiences (e.g., “have you even been in a situation where your supervisor or co-worker...interrupted you, yelled at you, paid little attention to you”; Cortina et al., 2013, p. 1600). In light of the findings from Study 1, incivility is an accumulation of perceptions, sense-making, and context. As such, the PVM provided a better assessment of incivility in that it targets individuals’ perceptions, thereby facilitating a more theoretically-aligned measurement of the underlying construct.

The present research also showed that the mindfulness facets of acting with awareness and non-judging mainly moderated the relationship between incivility and negative affect and the indirect relationship between incivility and stress, and incivility and forgiveness via negative affect. As noted throughout this dissertation, after experiencing incivility, individuals tended to experience negative emotions. From my interviews, many participants said they felt upset, angry, hurt, and sad. Although incivility and rumination were significantly correlated (as expected), the mindfulness facets did not buffer against negative incivility outcomes (except for non-reactivity

when the formative measure was used). This warrants further examination into the nature of (1) rumination and (2) non-reactivity (discussed below).

**Rumination.** The current study hypothesized that mindfulness would buffer the relationship between incivility and rumination. Although participants who experienced incivility reported increased rumination, mindfulness did not buffer the relationship. However, perhaps the relation between mindfulness and ruminative thinking is not as straightforward. Indeed, Raes and Williams (2010) argued that not all rumination is negative. It is only when rumination is uncontrollable that it can be classified as potentially maladaptive or dysfunctional. Perhaps it is only under these conditions that practicing mindfulness is particularly important. At certain levels, rumination may be helpful as it allows individuals to process their feelings and analyze reasons and meaning behind an event. From the qualitative study, I found that individuals often thought about the situation in which the incivility was experienced, trying to make sense of the incident, and strategizing for the future. Future studies could examine the tipping point that may happen where rumination shifts from an analytic phase (one that is a common human experience; McLaughlin, Sibrava, Behar, & Borkovec, 2006) to an uncontrollable stage. Mindfulness may potentially buffer that relationship such that individuals become more aware of their ruminative responses and are able to decenter from them before they spiral or escalate into dysfunctional rumination.

Another important aspect to consider in the relationship between mindfulness and rumination may be the temporal nature of rumination. The few studies that have examined the temporal nature of rumination (e.g., Ilies, Johnson, Judge, & Keeney, 2011; Verduyn, Delvaux, Van Coillie, Tuerlinckx, & Iven Mechelen, 2009) have found that the duration of thoughts experienced was related to the intensity of the experience. In other words, the greater the

intensity of the experience, the longer the thoughts persisted. It could be that the thoughts experienced after an uncivil encounter diminish very quickly. This reasoning is in line with Meier and Gross (2015) who found experienced incivility only predicted instigated incivility when the duration between the two events was short. Thus, the emotional experiences associated with incivility may be short-lived. To capture the event, researchers would need to be present as the incivility was happening to most accurately investigate the relationships. The fact that most participants interviewed described a singular event (only two of the 15 participants described an on-going experience), suggests the necessity of studying the encounter in real-time. When participants have an exit strategy in place or have resolved not to build a relationship with their perpetrator anymore, rumination was no longer a central element in their experience.

**Non-reactivity.** In hindsight, it may be that the outcomes investigated (i.e., stress and forgiveness) were not theoretically relevant to non-reactivity. For instance, forgiveness is an active process, whereas non-reactivity would likely not catapult action. To forgive, individuals must re-interpret intentions and replace negative emotion. Perhaps non-reactivity can help with the down-regulation of negative affect caused by incidents of workplace incivility, but forgiveness may also require the up-regulation of positive affect (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010; Worthington et al., 2010). In that case, non-reactivity allows individuals to experience more neutral emotions but it may not be enough to make people forgive. An individual is not likely to forgive if they are not actively engaging in letting go of resentment or restoring a relationship. Similar to stress, individuals might need to build up resources, and look for support, and this might not be possible if they are not "reacting" or are simply accepting the situation status quo. Additionally, to feel less stressed, individuals must re-interpret the event so that it is no longer perceived as a threat. Individuals high in non-reactivity would simply accept the situation at hand

without doing anything to alter the perception of the event. Thus, non-reactivity may not promote forgiveness or buffer stress. Instead, by being aware and non-judging, individuals would not make rash decisions or act up. They would take more time to process the event thus increasing the likelihood of forgiveness. Accordingly, awareness and non-judging could be the first steps to forgiveness.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Findings from the qualitative study presented several notable findings, which can be used to enhance our understanding of workplace incivility experiences and to assist in the interpretation of Study 2 findings. Below, I first present how key findings from Study 1 can be incorporated into theoretical models of incivility. I then discuss the theoretical implications from Study 2 and where appropriate, use findings from Study 1 to aid in the interpretation.

**Ineffective communication.** Many workplace incivility incidents tended to be defined by ineffective communication, whereby the perpetrator and victim experienced difficulties understanding one another. This suggests that the perpetrator and victim both play a role in the workplace incivility interaction. The dual role of the victim and perpetrator has not yet been considered. Specifically how does each, perpetrator and victim, contribute to ineffective communication that then becomes perceived as incivility? Previous research has focused on perpetrator and victim characteristics separately when investigating predictors of workplace incivility (e.g., Harold & Holtz, 2014; Milam, Spitzmueller, & Penney, 2009; Miner, Pesonen, Smittick, Siegel, & Clark, 2014). Even studies that investigate cyber incivility (e.g., Giumetti et al., 2013; Lim & Teo, 2009), only investigate the amount of cyber incivility observed, rather than examining a thread of email exchanges between the victim and perpetrator. For instance, several interview participants wondered whether the way they were wording things exacerbated the

situation. Additionally, one participant repeatedly emphasized the importance of dialogue in promoting a civil environment. This research suggests that perhaps the interplay of each (victim and perpetrator) contributes to the perception of incivility. Perhaps differences in communication style might be an important predictor of workplace incivility. Differences in communication style and how individuals interpret the conversation can lead to misinterpretations (Grice, 1968; Holtgraves, 1997), thereby facilitating perceptions of rude behaviour. Understanding how employees interpret and attend to conversational cues could enrich the workplace incivility literature.

**Disbelief.** Many interviewees described the perpetrator's behaviour as inappropriate. This is in line with one of the key features of incivility in that it is a violation of mutual norms for respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). What is not fully captured in this feature is the extent to which the behaviour is perceived as shocking. Although the uncivil behaviour will never be considered appropriate (i.e., the behaviour will violate norms for mutual respect), when employees are newer to the organization, or have not yet been exposed to that behaviour from the perpetrator, they are more likely to be vulnerable to it and consequently be more upset by it. Indeed, when interview participants described their later experiences they did not have the same emotional reaction as the first time. Rather, they tended to shrug it off. The extent to which the perpetrator is shocked by the behaviour may prompt or inhibit certain responses. Knowing how shocked a participant is by the uncivil behaviour, may predict the extent of their rumination and negative affect. It may also relate to mindfulness, such that participants would need to engage in less mindfulness the less shocking the behaviour is.

**Embarrassment.** Many emotions experienced after a workplace incivility event have been described in the literature. These include but are not limited to anger, hurt, and sadness.

One emotion that has received little attention is embarrassment (cf. Hershcovis, Ogunfowora, Reich, & Christie, 2017). In a recent study, Hershcovis et al. (2017) found that employees felt embarrassed following an incivility incident and that embarrassment led to reduced feelings of job security and somatic symptoms. Experiencing workplace incivility, like other forms of mistreatment, signals a lack of belongingness and a loss of face. In Study 1, participants described the perpetrator's behaviour as awkward and embarrassing. Interestingly, for some, the embarrassment was inward-focused, where participants feared what others would think of them and their performance; for others the embarrassment was outward-focused. Specifically, they were embarrassed to be associated with an organization who employed these individuals and tolerated such behaviour. There may be differences in whether individuals feel inward or outward embarrassment, why they feel it, and how it relates to theoretically relevant outcome variables.

**Mindfulness.** This dissertation also shed light on the nature and measurement of mindfulness. Mindfulness is best studied using a multi-faceted approach, as not all facets are relevant in the prediction of incivility outcomes. I found the facets of non-judging and acting with awareness most relevant in the prediction of incivility outcomes (Baer et al., 2006). These two facets are important in that they encourage individuals to actively refrain from negative thoughts and behaviours. On the other hand, non-reactivity does not capture an individual's attempt to resolve a situation. The facets of describing and observing, although important to *what* mindfulness is, may not buffer against negative incivility outcomes as victims could describe or observe the event negatively.

**Incivility and COR theory.** Results from Study 2 align with COR theory. Incivility functions as an actual or perceived threat to employees. When individuals experience incivility at



work, they may associate that with a loss of resources. The resources they could lose are things such as a positive affect, social belonging, or meaningful relationships at work. Indeed, participants in Study 1 noted how after the incident they experienced various negative outcomes and were worried about their status within the organization. The threat also triggered feelings of stress (i.e., spikes in anxiety). Mindfulness, specifically non-judging and awareness, however, served a protective function, guarding against resource loss. More mindful individuals were less prone to experiencing the negative outcomes associated with incivility. This is perhaps due to mindfulness' regulatory process of decoupling the self from experience, which would reduce the automatic elicitation of negative affect. In fact, one interview participant noted how he used mindful meditation to help cope with uncivil encounters. Rather than experience an incivility encounter as a threat, mindful individuals can experience the event without inferring self-relevance or associating it with their own self-worth. Because mindfulness can also decrease automaticity, it can help manage responses and behaviour in response to incivility. Rather than responding with more incivility or retaliatory behaviour, mindful individuals are less inclined to react quickly making it more likely they will take the time to forgive the perpetrator.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Despite the novel findings and theoretical implication discussed above, this dissertation is not without limitations. Below, I discuss the limitations and how future research may address them.

Asking participants to recall an incivility incident is subject to memory bias. For instance, many participants in Study 1 stated that if they could go back in time, they would not have done anything differently. Participants may have been experiencing cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) in that to reduce the discrepancy between what they did and what they might have liked to

do, altered the latter by claiming they would not have done anything differently. In Study 2, participants were also asked to recall an uncivil incident. Using a critical incident technique helps ease memory recall by improving the accuracy and vividness of recall (Hershcovis, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2015). Future research may wish to employ methods that further ease memory recall concerns. For instance, using experience sampling methodology (ESM) may enable researchers to capture the event as it happens as well as the temporal nature of employees' emotions and thoughts. Instead of having participants recall an event that happened one week, one month, or six months ago, they would report on the event as it happens in real time. This can reduce memory bias and capture feelings, thoughts, and behaviour in the moment. Currently, few studies have employed this design to study episodic incivility (e.g., Beattie & Griffin, 2014a, 2014b; Meier & Gross, 2015). Using this type of event-based methodology might be better suited to studying incivility especially considering Meier and Gross's suggestion that the effects of incivility are short-lived.

Interviewing participants of varying ages and backgrounds might have limited my ability to discern occupation-specific or age-specific contextual factors or elements of a rude experience. The generality of the sample (i.e., varying ages, gender, and occupations), however, did help establish non-variant elements of the incivility experience which previous research had not yet considered (e.g., communication, outward embarrassment). There may be a specific population which future research may want to investigate more closely. For example, interviewing and tracking newly hired female employees in male dominated industries could reveal many interesting theoretical and practical implications.

The present study only examined the moderating role of dispositional mindfulness. It was beyond the scope the current research to examine whether mindfulness training can improve

dispositional mindfulness and its buffering role in the experience of incivility. Future research however, may want to explore how mindfulness training can equip employees with resources to effectively manage uncivil encounters. One of the most common training interventions is the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992). MBSR usually consists of 8 weekly, 2.5-hour classes that encourage formal meditation practices (e.g., body scanning, mindful yoga exercises, mindful breathing, bodily sensations, sounds, and thoughts) and informal practices that encourage application of mindfulness skills to cope more effectively with stress and anxiety (Grossman, Neimann, Schmidt, & Walach 2004). In addition to the benefits of the MBSR, other research (e.g., Manotas et al., 2014; Pepping et al., 2013) has shown that even brief mindfulness training (ranging from 15 minutes to 4 weeks) increases one's capacity to self-regulate. Future research should continue to investigate the usefulness of mindfulness training interventions, specifically how they can improve individuals' responses to mistreatment. Research may partner with organizations that offer on the job stress reductions programs or meditation to see if such training, when incorporated into the workplace, can improve employee attitudes, employee behaviour, and organizational effectiveness (Roche et al., 2014).

Future research may also want to consider several additional predictor and moderating variables. My interviews revealed the importance of disbelief and communication in incivility experiences. Perhaps, participants who are not as shocked by the behaviour do not experience the more proximal outcomes of incivility. If individuals are not in disbelief with regards to the perpetrators' behaviour, they may not engage in rumination. Individuals would not need to try and explain the behaviour as much as if it had caught them off-guard. Because many participants from my qualitative study recounted an incident that happened when they first started their job, future research can also explore newcomer status as a moderator. Newcomers are more likely

than well-seasoned employees to experience negative incivility outcomes because they would have yet to have many interactions with the colleagues. As such, rude behaviour might be particularly shocking in the early days and months of their new job. Moderators may also be sequentially linked such that newcomers experience more disbelief thereby enhancing the relationship between incivility and rumination.

Differences in communication styles might be a predictor of perceptions of uncivil interactions. As my interviews revealed, uncivil encounters can stem from misunderstandings. Perhaps differences in communication styles facilitate perceptions of incivility. If individuals attend to different conversational cues, they will associate different meaning to the conversation, which will make misunderstandings more likely (Sanchez-Burks, Lee, Choi, Nisbett, Zhao, & Koo, 2003). With more frequent interactions, perhaps perceptions of incivility will decrease, as employees are less shocked by the behaviour and establish baseline communication norms and processes with their colleagues (Sanchez-Burks et al, 2003).

Another moderator that will be important to examine is intent. The PVM measured the degree to which the victim was hurt by the perpetrator's behaviour as well as the extent to which they thought the behaviour was intentional. This is problematic in that incivility is defined by ambiguous intent; individuals may interpret the behaviour as intentional or they may think the behaviour was accidental or an oversight. Researchers argue however, that unless the behaviour is perceived as intentional, the target of the behaviour does not feel victimized (e.g., Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Buss, 1961). Because the PVM encompasses both perceptions (victimization and intent), the above assumption is difficult to assess. The combined nature of perception and intention made it impossible to tease apart the separate influences of each. This is important as intent might exacerbate the negative relationship between incivility and its negative outcomes

(Hershcovis, 2011). Future research should develop and validate a reflective mistreatment scale that separates perceptions of rudeness from perceptions of intent. A reflective measure may simply ask the extent to which participants agree they were treated rudely and then examine intent as a moderator.

Finally, future research with respect to barriers of resolution is warranted. Despite the benefits of forgiveness, I found that many participants continued to harbor a negative attitude toward their perpetrator and opted to end the relationship. Potential barriers to resolution include, but are not limited to: validation from others, interdependence between perpetrator and victim, victim's job security, and the organization's response. Investigating these factors could shed additional light on why victims often do not chose forgiveness and reconciliation after an experience of incivility, potentially degrading the overall collegial environment within an organization.

### **Practical Implications and Recommendations**

The overarching trend observed in this dissertation, which builds upon the previous empirical research on the topic of incivility, is that when employees experience rude and discourteous behaviour, they suffer negative outcomes. Employees who have been the target of uncivil behaviour in the workplace tend to be more stressed, and experience greater negative affect, all of which can take away from their ability to concentrate and perform well, and maintain a desired level of well-being.

This study reinforces the recommendation for the introduction and promotion of mindfulness training in the workplace. Mindfulness training such as the MBSR teaches individuals to become more cognizant of their surroundings and to relate differently to their thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations (Shapiro et al., 2005, p. 165). Specifically, individuals

learn how to observe stimuli in a non-judgmental and more aware way. Numerous studies have shown that mindfulness interventions reduce stress and anxiety (Leroy et al., 2014; Manotas et al., 2014; Shaprio, Schwarts, & Bonner, 1998). Mindfulness interventions can include group meetings where participants discuss stress and coping strategies, take part in several mindfulness meditation exercises during the sessions, and practice mindfulness skills outside the group meetings (Baer, 2003). Bazarko, Cate, Azocar, and Kreitzer (2013), Manotas et al. (2014), and Poulin, Mackenzie, Soloway, and Karayolas (2014) also found that different versions of mindfulness training (group telephonic, brief intervention, mindfulness training with a focus on health and wellness promotion,) helped reduce stress and promote well-being in health-care professionals. Organizations may be well-inclined to offer mindfulness training during lunch breaks, designate a mindfulness room, or support mindfulness training as part of employees' benefits.

Another implication of these findings is that organizations need to be more active in establishing a climate and culture of civility. Many participants in Study 1 commented on how the organization's response to the behaviour changed their attitude towards the organization. Participants who felt the organization supported and/or did not tolerate uncivil behaviour had a positive view of their organization. On the other hand, participants who felt the organization supported the perpetrator either by purporting an uncivil climate or turning a blind eye, often experienced a negative shift in perception. Organizations can promote such a positive climate through its policies and practices, and through the actions of its leaders. Indeed, one of the more frequently used coping strategy of interview participants was to seek out their boss or supervisor for advice and reassurance.

Establishing a culture of civility is an effortful process; enforcing civility policies may be best when key organizational figures embody these values and policies (Cortina, 2008, p. 62). That is, organizational leaders can demonstrate what an acceptable code of conduct is, thereby setting clear norms for respect (Cortina, 2008). Their behaviour will in turn guide the behaviour of their employees. According to Naylor, Pritchard, and Ilgen's (1980) theory of behaviour in organizations, organizational climate influences individuals' perceptions, which through social learning, can then influence subsequent behaviour. As such, if employees perceive that their organization's policies and practices do not tolerate uncivil behaviour, they will be less likely to engage in uncivil behaviour. Research has shown that setting clear expectations that harassment behaviour is not tolerated and is even punished, reduced incidences of harassment in the workplace (e.g., Kath, Swody, Magely, Bunk, & Gallus, 2009; Timmerman & Bajema, 2002; Williams, et al., 1999). This suggests that clear expectations on civility will have an impact on employee behaviour and the stress of would-be incivility targets.

Organizations may also want to consider the importance of effective communication styles. Interviews from Study 1 revealed that many times, incivility is perceived as a miscommunication and an inability for the perpetrator and victim to understand and communicate effectively with one another. Employees need to be able to communicate with people of all ages and backgrounds. To do so, employees would not only need to be able to understand their own communication style and that of their colleagues, but also be able to modify their own communication style depending on the situation (Hartman & McCambridge, 2011). Organizations can offer training and exercises that enhance employees' understanding of their own communications style and how to "flex" it depending on others' communication styles.

A final recommendation discerned from this research is directed at the vulnerability newcomers experience in the first days, weeks, and months of a job. Many participants in my qualitative study recounted an incident that occurred early in their tenure. This suggests effective socialization tactics and formal, institutionalized onboarding processes may be essential in alleviating the vulnerability newcomers' experience. Research has shown that effective onboarding makes new employees feel more welcome and provides them with a better understanding of their colleagues and the organization (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

The present research used qualitative and quantitative methods to enrich the current understanding of workplace incivility experiences. This dissertation obtained rich descriptions of workplace incivility experiences and examined several facets of mindfulness as regulatory variables. Findings from this dissertation offered new insight into how future incivility researchers may wish to investigate incivility, and has provided practitioners with several suggestions and resources for combating incivility. Workplace incivility causes distress for employees, albeit some employees are more vulnerable due to contextual factors. How employees make sense of the event and how the organization responds to such behaviour are associated with effectively mitigating negative outcomes to incivility.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Study One Ethics Approval



Research Ethics

#### Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

**Principal Investigator:** Prof. Joan Finegan  
**Department & Institution:** Social Science\Management & Organizational Studies, Western University

**NMREB File Number:** 107692  
**Study Title:** Experiences of Incivility at Work: Perceptions, Behaviour, and Meaning

**NMREB Initial Approval Date:** March 02, 2016  
**NMREB Expiry Date:** March 02, 2017

#### Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Other	Debriefing form	2016/01/25
Recruitment Items	Follow-up Email	2016/03/01
Western University Protocol	Received March 1, 2016	
Recruitment Items	Recruitment Email	2016/02/19
Letter of Information & Consent		2016/02/19
Instruments	Interview guide	2016/02/19

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

  
 Ethics Officer, on behalf of Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information: 

*This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files*

## Appendix B

## Study One Recruitment Email

Recruitment Email Subject Line: Invitation to Participate in Research

I am inviting you to participate in an interview being conducted by a graduate student, Rima Tarraf and her doctoral supervisor, Joan Finegan. The interview will take no more than one hour, and will be conducted on site or by phone. As part of her graduate studies at the University of Western Ontario, Rima is carrying out a study to understand how employees experience incidents of workplace incivility where they are the target of rude and discourteous behaviour. The researchers are interested in learning how employees perceive and describe their experiences of workplace incivility and whether these experiences differ across individuals and situations.

The risks in this study are minimal. As you will be recounting incidents of incivility, you may experience minor stress. You will receive a \$10 gift card to Starbucks for sharing your experiences and insights.

You can stop being in this study at any time during the interview without penalty. As such, you will still receive a gift card even if the interview is stopped. I have attached a copy of a letter of information about the study that gives you full details.

After a week, I will send you a one-time follow-up reminder.

If you wish to participate, or learn more about the study, please contact the researcher, Rima Tarraf [REDACTED] to set up an interview time and preferred location.

Sincerely,

## Appendix C

## Study One Interview Protocol and Guide

*This is a research study on workplace incivility. This has been defined as a form of interpersonal mistreatment consisting of three characteristics: violation of workplace norms and respect, ambiguous intent to harm, and low intensity. Talking down to others, not listening when somebody is talking to you, and ignoring someone are all examples of workplace incivility.*

*The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. However you may find it stressful or uncomfortable talking about a time when someone was rude to you but you can stop at any point during the interview and you don't have to answer any question you don't want to.*

*Do you have any questions before we get started?*

*Do you have any experiences that would fit this description?*

Interview questions:

1. Tell me about the situation.
  - a. What was going on at the time?
  - b. What made you think it was rude?
  - c. What was/is your relationship to the person?
  - d. How did it make you feel?
  - e. What do you remember thinking? What was going through your head when so and so did that?
  - f. What else stood out to you?
  - g. Did you do anything at the time?
2. Did anything happen to invite that sort of behaviour?
  - a. Have you encountered that behaviour before?
  - b. What was going on at the time?
  - c. Thinking back, would you have done anything differently?
  - d. Was there anyone else involved?
3. How did that sort of behaviour affect you?
  - a. How did that experience affect you?
  - b. What changes do you associate with the experience? How did your relationship with that person change?
  - c. How did this experience affect other significant people in your life?
  - d. Are there times where you experience the same behaviour but are not affected by it? How are you affected by the same behaviour in other situations? In what ways was your reaction (behaviour) to 'incivility' different than other times?
4. Do you do anything that might help you feel less bothered/affected? Tell me about things you did or ways that helped you cope with the incivility
  - a. When people are rude to you, what do you do?
  - b. How does this strategy work out for you? What typically happens afterwards?

- c. Are there times when you want to act one way but behave in another way? Have you thought of other ways you'd like to respond? (Sometimes we act in one way but in hindsight wished we acted differently) – How have you seen other people respond to incivility?
  - d. If you don't act the way you want to then what stops you?
- 5. Is there anything else about that experience that you wish to share?

## Appendix D

## Study One Letter of Information and Consent Form

**Project Title:** Experiences of Incivility at work: Perceptions, Behaviour, and Meaning

**Document Title:** Letter of Information and Consent

**Principal Investigator + Contact:** Dr. Joan Finegan [REDACTED]

**Additional Research Staff + Contact:** Rima Tarraf [REDACTED]

### 1. Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in a study that examines employees' experiences and reactions to events in the workplace that are characterized as rude and discourteous because you might have experienced such incidents.

### 2. Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to understand your experiences with incivility at work. What it means to you, why you think it happens, and how you responded to it.

### 3. How long will you be in this study?

This will be a one-on-one interview and is expected to take up to one hour.

### 4. What are the study procedures?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to respond to a series of questions on your experiences with workplace incivility such as what thoughts you had pertaining to the incident and how you behaved. The interview will be set up either over the phone or in an office in the Social Science Building at the University of Western Ontario. For data collection purposes, your responses will be recorded using an audio tape recorder. To participate in this study, you must agree to be recorded.

To be able to participate you must be over 25 years of age, currently residing in the United States or Canada, and be currently employed.

### 5. What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?

As this study asks about rude events that you may have experienced, there is a small chance that you may experience minor stress, although this should not be more than any of the stress you would normally encounter on the job.

### 6. What are the benefits of participating in this study?

You will have the opportunity to directly participate in and have an active role in the research study. Information gathered from your interview may influence how we conceptualize and study workplace mistreatment.

### **7. Can participants choose to leave the study?**

You can decline to answer any questions and stop the interview at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. You have the right to request withdrawal of information collected about you. If you wish to have your information removed, please let the researcher know.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose not to answer a question, or withdraw at any time and request without penalty and without loss of the benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

### **8. How will participants' information be kept confidential?**

All responses are strictly confidential and your name will not appear anywhere on the materials. If the results of this study are published no information that discloses your identity or your employer or colleagues will be released or published. Audio tape recordings will only be heard by the study researchers. All research records will be stored on a password protected computer only accessible by the study investigators. Data will be retained for 5 years after which the data will be removed and destroyed from our databases.

### **9. Are participants compensated to be in this study?**

For participating in this study, you will receive a \$10 gift card to Starbucks. You will still receive a Starbucks gift card even if you stop the interview.

### **10. What are the rights of participants?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on your employment status or compensation.

You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

### **11. Whom do participants contact for questions?**

If you have questions about this research study please contact the Principal Investigator, Joan Finegan, [REDACTED].

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Director of the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Western Ontario ([REDACTED]).

**This letter is yours to keep for future reference.**



**Project Title:** Experiences of Incivility at work: Perceptions, Behaviour, and Meaning

**Document Title:** Letter of Information and Consent

**Principal Investigator + Contact:** Dr. Joan Finegan [REDACTED]

**Additional Research Staff + Contact:** Rima Tarraf ([REDACTED])

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to be audio / video-recorded in this research

☐ YES ☐ NO

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

☐ YES ☐ NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Participant's Signature**

**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Investigator's Signature**

## Appendix E

## Study One Debriefing form



## DEBRIEFING FORM

## Experiences of Incivility at Work: Perceptions, Behaviour, and Meaning

Thank you for your participation in this study. The purpose of this study was to gather your story of experiences with workplace incivility (i.e., rude and discourteous treatment at work). Although researchers have accumulated a wealth of knowledge regarding the antecedents and consequences of workplace incivility, we still do not know *how* an employee experiences incivility. Specifically, how does an employee perceive a rude interaction, feel about it, talk about it, or cope with it? Incivility is often ambiguous in its intent which is why it is essential to understand an employee's perspective. Additionally, as incivility has the chance to provoke more incivility and possibly spiral into more severe forms of mistreatment it is important to understand the context and situational factors that might fuel this 'spiral'.

Your responses will help us to gain a deeper understanding of what incivility is and how it functions in the workplace. We made no predictions regarding what we would find, as this was a qualitative study and the purpose of such studies is generally is to seek an understanding of people's perspectives and experiences rather than to quantify anything. We conducted interviews since they afford researchers a first-hand account of employees' work experiences.

The answers you provided in this interview will be used to inform a narrative description of how employees experience workplace incivility and hopefully provide researchers and practitioners with a more complete and holistic understanding of this phenomenon.

Here are some references if you would like to read more.

Andersson, L. M., & Pearson, C. M. (1999). Tit for tat? The spiralling effect of incivility in the workplace. *Academy of Management Review*, 24, 452-471.

Bunk, J. A., Karabin, J., & Lear, T. (2011). Understanding why workers engage in rude behaviours: a social interactionist perspective. *Current Psychology*, 30, 74-80. doi: 10.1007/s12144-011-9102-5

Sofaer, S. (1999). Qualitative methods: What are they and why use them? *Health Services Research*, 34, 1101-1118. doi: 10.1093/intqhc/14.4.329.

If you have experienced any incidents of bullying or incivility at work you can find resources and support at the following websites:

<http://www.workplacebullying.org/individuals/solutions/wbi-action-plan/>

<http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/bullying.html>

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact us. A soft copy of this form will also be sent to your email address. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Director of the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Western Ontario at [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca) or (519) 661-3036.

We very much appreciate your participation in this research.


Sincerely,

Rima Tarraf  
Ph.D Candidate  
Department of Psychology  
University of Western Ontario  
[REDACTED]

Joan Finegan, Ph.D  
Academic Dean, Faculty of Social Science  
Associate Professor, Department of Psychology  
University of Western Ontario  
[REDACTED]

## Appendix F

## Study Two Ethics Approval



**Western  
Research**

**Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board  
NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice**

**Principal Investigator:** Prof. Joan Finegan  
**Department & Institution:** Social Science\Management & Organizational Studies, Western University

**NMREB File Number:** 108335  
**Study Title:** Reactions to Rude Treatment at Work

**NMREB Initial Approval Date:** August 18, 2016  
**NMREB Expiry Date:** August 18, 2017

**Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:**

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol		2016/08/17
Advertisement	Advertisement/recruitment letter to be posted on the MTurk website	2016/07/26
Letter of Information & Consent		2016/08/17
Instruments	Study Measures	2016/08/08
Other	Debriefing form	2016/07/26

Research Ethics

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

Ethics Officer:

**Western University, Research, Support Services Bldg., Rm. 5150**  
 London, ON, Canada N6G 1G9 t. 519.661.3036 f. 519.850.2466 [www.uwo.ca/research/ethics](http://www.uwo.ca/research/ethics)

## Appendix G

## Critical Incident Instructions

Workplace incivility is defined as low intensity deviant acts with ambiguous intent to harm the target in violation of organizational norms for mutual respect. Examples include: being ignored, excluded, undermined, condescended to, and general rudeness. Research has shown that almost 100% of employees have experienced incivility at work.

Please take a moment to think about a time in the last six months when someone at work was uncivil towards you. Please describe the incident in as much detail as possible below. Ensure you describe the context, the nature of the person who was uncivil to you, your reaction, and any other relevant information.

## Appendix H

## Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina et al., 2013)

Participants responded to each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

To what extent do you agree that the person you identified in the situation above...

1. Paid little attention to your statements or showed little interest in your opinions.
2. Doubted your judgment on a matter over which you had responsibility.
3. Gave you hostile looks, stares, or sneers.
4. Addressed you in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately.
5. Interrupted or “spoke over” you.
6. Rated you lower than you deserved on an evaluation.
7. Yelled, shouted, or swore at you.
8. Made insulting or disrespectful remarks about you.
9. Ignored you or failed to speak to you (e.g., gave you “the silent treatment”).
10. Accused you of incompetence.
11. Targeted you with anger outbursts or “temper tantrums.”
12. Made jokes at your expense.

## Appendix I

## Perceived Victimization Scale (Sasso, 2013)

Participants responded to each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

1. I was intentionally subjected to a hurtful experience.
2. My feelings were hurt by an antagonistic act directed against me.
3. Harmful behaviour was intentionally directed towards me.
4. I was purposefully humiliated.
5. I felt deliberately accosted.

## Appendix J

## Forgiveness Scale (Rye, 1995)

Participants responded using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all accurate*) to 7 (*very accurate*).

1. I can't stop thinking about how I was wronged by [initials of the person identified in the situation above].
2. I wish for good things to happen to [initials of the person identified in the situation above].
3. I spend time thinking about ways to get back at [initials of the person identified in the situation above].
4. I feel resentful toward [initials of the person identified in the situation above].
5. I avoid certain people and/or places because they remind me of [initials of the person identified in the situation above].
6. I pray for [initials of the person identified in the situation above].
7. If I encountered [initials of the person identified in the situation above] I would feel at peace.
8. [initials of the person identified in the situation above]'s wrongful actions have kept me from enjoying life.
9. I have been able to let go of my anger toward [initials of the person identified in the situation above].
10. I become depressed when I think of how I was mistreated by [initials of the person identified in the situation above].
11. I think that many of the emotional wounds related to [initials of the person identified in the situation above]'s wrongful actions have been healed.
12. I feel hatred whenever I think about [initials of the person identified in the situation above].
13. I have compassion for [initials of the person identified in the situation above].
14. I think my life is ruined because of [initials of the person identified in the situation above]'s wrongful actions.
15. I hope [initials of the person identified in the situation above] is treated fairly by others in the future.



## Appendix K

## PANAS (Watson et al., 1989)

Participants will respond using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*very slightly or not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*).

As a consequence of the situation you described, did you feel...?

1. Distressed
2. Upset
3. Guilty
4. Scared
5. Hostile
6. Irritable
7. Ashamed
8. Nervous
9. Jittery
10. Afraid

## Appendix L

## Anger Rumination Scale (Sukhodolsky et al., 2001)

Participants will respond using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Only using the angry aftermath and anger memories (AM) subscale

1. I ruminate about my past anger experiences. (AM)
2. I ponder about the injustices that have been done to me. (AM)
3. I keep thinking about events that angered me for a long time. (AM)
4. After an argument is over, I keep fighting with this person in my imagination.
5. I think about certain events from a long time ago and they still make me angry. (AM)
6. Memories of being aggravated pop into my mind before I fall asleep.
7. I feel angry about certain events in my life. (AM)
8. Whenever I experience anger, I keep thinking about it for a while.
9. Memories of even minor annoyances bother me for a while.
10. When something makes me angry, I turn this matter over and over again in my mind.
11. I re-enact the anger episode in my mind after it has happened.

## Appendix M

## MHI (Viet &amp; Ware, 1983)

Participants will respond on a 7-point scale: Almost never, rarely, sometime, often, and very often

As a consequence of the situation you described, how often did you feel...?

1. Very nervous
2. Bothered by nervousness
3. Tense or high-strung
4. Anxious, worried
5. Difficulty trying to calm down
6. Nervous or jumpy
7. Restless, fidgety, unflustered
8. Rattled, upset, flustered
9. Hands shake when doing things
10. Relax without difficulty
11. Moody, brooded about things
12. Low or very low spirits
13. Downhearted and blue
14. Depressed
15. Strains, stress, pressure

## Appendix N

## The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer et al., 2006)

Participants will respond using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*never or very rarely true*) to 7 (*very often or always true*).

## Non-reactivity to Inner Experience

1. I perceive my feelings and emotions without having to react to them.
2. I watch my feelings without getting lost in them.
3. In difficult situations, I can pause without immediately reacting. .
4. Usually when I have distressing thoughts or images, I am able just to notice them without reacting.
5. Usually when I have distressing thoughts or images, I feel calm soon after.
6. Usually when I have distressing thoughts or images, I “step back” and am aware of the thought or image without getting taken over by it.
7. Usually when I have distressing thoughts or images, I just notice them and let them go.

## Acting with awareness

1. I find it difficult to stay focused on what’s happening in the present.
2. It seems I am “running on automatic” without much awareness of what I’m doing
3. I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.
4. I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I’m doing.
5. I find myself doing things without paying attention.
6. When I do things, my mind wanders off and I’m easily distracted.
7. I don’t pay attention to what I’m doing because I’m daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted.
8. I am easily distracted.

## Non-judging

1. I criticize myself for having irrational or inappropriate emotions.
2. I tell myself that I shouldn’t be feeling the way I’m feeling.
3. I believe some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad and I shouldn’t think that way.
4. I make judgments about whether my thoughts are good or bad.
5. I tell myself I shouldn’t be thinking the way I’m thinking.
6. I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn’t feel them.
7. I disapprove of myself when I have irrational ideas.
8. Usually when I have distressing thoughts or images, I judge myself as good or bad, depending what the thought/image is about.

## Curriculum Vita

### Rima C. Tarraf

#### Education

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<i>University of Western Ontario</i>	London, ON
<b>Doctorate of Philosophy</b> , Industrial/Organizational Psychology	Sept. 2012 – Present
<b>Master of Science</b> , Industrial/Organizational Psychology	Jul. 2012
<i>American University of Beirut</i>	Beirut, Lebanon
<b>Bachelor of Science</b> , Major: Psychology	Jun. 2010
Graduated with distinction	

#### Work Experience

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Research and Evaluation Consultant <i>Alberta Health Services</i>	Apr. 2016 – Present Calgary, AB
Consultant <i>WorkEvOHlution</i>	Aug. 2015 – Jan. 2016 Calgary, AB
Research Assistant <i>University of Calgary and the University of Western Ontario</i>	Apr. 2013 – Dec. 2016
Sessional Instructor <i>University of Calgary and the University of Western Ontario</i>	Jan. 2013 – Apr. 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychology at Work</li> <li>• Psychometrics</li> </ul>	
Research Associate <i>Sigma Assessment Systems</i>	Oct. 2014 – Aug. 2015
<i>Youth Opportunities Unlimited</i>	May 2013 – May 2014 London, ON

#### Achievements and Extracurricular Activities

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Graduate Research Award, University of Western Ontario (2015)  
 Western Graduate Research Scholarship, University of Western Ontario (2010-2015)  
 Women's Varsity Volleyball Team, American University of Beirut (2007-2010)

#### Peer-Reviewed Book Chapters

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**Tarraf, R. C.**, Hershcovis, M. S., & Barling, N. (2017). Moving the field of workplace aggression forward: Thoughts and recommendations. In M. S. Hershcovis & N. Bowling (Eds.), *Research and theory on workplace aggression* (pp. 350-370). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

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**Peer-Reviewed Articles**

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- McLarnon, M. J. W., & **Tarraf, R. C.** (2017). The Dark Triad: Specific or general sources of variance? A bifactor exploratory structural equation modeling approach. *Personality and Individual Differences, 112*, 67-73.
- Bourdage, J. S., Roulin, N., & **Tarraf, R. C.** (R&R). I'm just that good: Development and validation of a measure of honest impression management in employment interviews. *Personnel Psychology*.
- Anderson, B. K., Nadler, R. T., Carswell, J. J., & **Tarraf, R. C.** (under review). Mindfulness and exercise: how they impact well-being at work. *Personality and Individual Differences*.

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**Reports**

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- Esses, V., Ravanera, Z., Hamilton, L. K., Drolet, J., Sutter, A., Medianu, S., & **Tarraf, R. C.** (2016, May). Improving refugee outcomes in Alberta and Canada: An analysis of integration challenges and strategies for improving economic, social, and civic/political integration. Report written for Government of Alberta.

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**Peer-Reviewed Conference Presentations**

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- Tarraf, R. C.**, & Finegan, J. E. (2016, April). *A panacea after all? The moderating role of mindfulness on incivility outcomes*. Poster presented at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Anaheim, CA.
- Bourdage, J. S., **Tarraf, R. C.**, & Roulin, N. (2016, April). *Target acquired: A theoretical model of target antecedents of impression management use and effectiveness*. In N. Roulin & J. S. Bourdage (Chairs), New directions in impression management and faking in employment interviews. Symposium presented at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Anaheim, CA.
- Tarraf, R. C.**, King, G. A., Klafehn, J., & McLarnon, M. J. W. (2015, April). *The nature of challenging cross-cultural military experiences*. In M. J. W. McLarnon & M. G. Rothstein (Chairs), Investigating the dynamic role of self-regulation in the resiliency process. Symposium presented at the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Philadelphia, PA.
- Bourdage, J. S., Roulin, N., & **Tarraf, R. C.** (2015, April). *Further validation of the interview honest impression management measure*. In N. Roulin & J. S. Bourdage (Chairs), Recent developments in interview impression management and faking research. Symposium presented at the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Philadelphia, PA.
- Tarraf, R. C.**, McLarnon, M. J. W., Rothstein, M. G., & O'Brien, J. P. (2014, May). *Exploring the nature and prediction of job performance profiles*. Poster presented at the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Honolulu, HI.
- Tarraf, R. C.**, & Finegan, J. E. (2013, June). *Workplace incivility: Dimensionality effects*. Paper presented at the 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Canadian Psychological Association, Quebec City, QC.

- Tarraf, R. C., & Finegan, J. E.** (2013, June). *Taking a closer look at the source effects of workplace incivility*. Paper presented at the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada, Calgary, AB.
- Tarraf, R. C., Hamilton, L. K., & Finegan, J. E.** (2012, June). *Emotional labor: Measurement validation*. Paper presented at the 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Canadian Psychological Association, Halifax, NS.
- Tarraf, R. C., Hastings, S. E., Hamilton, L. K., Fife, J., & Finegan, J. E.** (2011, June). *The mediating effect of work-family conflict on the relation between emotional labor and job outcomes*. Paper presented at the 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Canadian Psychological Association, Toronto, ON.

### **Professional Associations**

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Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP)  
Canadian Psychological Association (CPA)